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STUDIES
IN THE
LITERARY BACKGROUNDS
OF ENGLISH RADICALISM
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION

BY
M. RAY ADAMS

*“Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven.”*

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To
CHARLOTTE
In grateful and loving memory

PREFACE

THIS book is a collection of studies intended to supplement the labors of other scholars in the backgrounds of the English Romantic Movement considered particularly in its revolutionary aspects. No one of the writers who are dealt with in detail has ever been treated with the thoroughness he deserves from the point of view taken here. The choice of each of them has been determined largely by the neglect that has been accorded him. Of such women as Mary Wollstonecraft and such men as Godwin, Paine, Holcroft, Thelwall, and the youthful romantic poets of the 1790's I have foregone details *per se*, for behold are they not written in many books of which the scholarly reader has a comparatively ready knowledge.

These are literary rather than political or social or historical studies. I have directed my inquiries not primarily towards facts themselves but towards the impact of facts upon the human spirit, or rather towards such expressions of this impact as transmute dead fact into quick thought and turn writing into literature. I have not applied the historical method to the treatment of my material. I have attempted no synthesis of the political or economic ideas of the revolutionary period. The stress has been thrown upon personalities rather than upon movements as such, upon the interpenetration of subject matter and personality rather than upon subject matter itself. My principal object has been to fill in a portion of the background of the great revolutionary writings of the period.

My indebtedness to the great body of writing and research on the French Revolution in relation to England is fully indicated specifically in the notes, and generally in the bibliography. I am under many obligations to the

library staffs of Princeton, Yale, and Harvard for the use of manuscript material and of books not elsewhere available in this country. My very special thanks are due to Mr. Herbert B. Anstaett, librarian of Franklin and Marshall College, for his untiring aid in helping me to locate the rarer bibliographical items. To Professor Ford K. Brown, of St. John's College, Annapolis, and to Professor Crane Brinton, of Harvard, I am grateful for helpful suggestions. But to the late Professor George McLean Harper, of Princeton, my indebtedness can not adequately be put into words. The Book itself is the fruit, however unworthy it may be, of his inspired teaching. Finally, I wish to express my very special thanks to the trustees of Franklin and Marshall College, whose generous grant has made possible the publication of this work.

Five of the essays have appeared in periodicals: "Joseph Fawcett and Wordsworth's Solitary," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XLVIII, 508-528 (June, 1933); "Joel Barlow, Political Romanticist," *American Literature*, IX, 113-152 (May, 1937); "Two Minor Disciples of Pantisocracy," *A Journal of English Literary History*, V, 285-301 (December, 1838), the title of which has been slightly changed here; "Mary Hays, Disciple of William Godwin," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, LV, 472-483 (June, 1940); "George Dyer and English Radicalism," *Modern Language Review*, XXXV, 447-469 (October, 1940). The remaining three are here printed for the first time.

It is the author's hope that these studies may contribute in some small way to the greater cherishing of the heritage of the French Revolution, the fruits of which are now being so seriously threatened.

M. R. A.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A STRONG belief in human progress came at a comparatively late stage in the history of thought. The philosophers and poets of antiquity looked backward to the Golden Age more often than forward to Utopia. During the Middle Ages the doctrine of total depravity so colored the generally accepted teachings about the nature and prospects of man that it made impossible a hopeful view concerning the future of the human race. The modern idea of progress was the gift of the Renaissance but it received its first great philosophic confirmation during the period of the French Revolution and was established on a yet surer basis by the scientific triumphs of the nineteenth century. The modern conception of the improvement of the human lot is the immediate outgrowth of scientific evolution in its wider implications but it has its roots in the philosophic radicalism of the late eighteenth century. Evolutionary thought has reduced the splendid vagaries of the philosophy of the French Revolution to something approaching order and system and in the process has trimmed off its obvious excesses. The recognition of this fact, however, has sometimes led to a minimizing of the new impetus and inspiration which the radical speculative thinkers gave to the agencies of human progress. The revolutionary faith, extravagant as it sometimes was, became one of the great impalpable moral forces of the world. Its influence has often be-

come latent, as in the totalitarian countries of our own time. And when it has emerged to hasten the march of humanity, it has taken forms as various as "rugged individualism," blind to the ruthlessness of the acquisitive instincts, and "social control," sometimes pathetic in its faith in benevolent leadership.

During our own time the political and social philosophy of the French Revolution has been weighed in more impartial fashion than at any time during the nineteenth century. It is a law no less of literature than of history, recognized when we gain its long perspective, that deep answers only unto deep. The general literary and philosophic affinity between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries has become increasingly evident. "The Englishman of the twentieth century," writes G. K. Chesterton,¹ "is groping his way back past all the literature of the nineteenth century, past all the varied Victorian romances of fashionable progress in Macaulay and fashionable reaction in Carlyle." He is turning again to an examination of first principles in which the late eighteenth century specialized. The greater part of the astonishingly varied and virile literature of political radicalism of this period in England seems to have been caught in the backwash of reactionary politics that followed the French Revolution, to have been carried far out into the vast ocean of obscurity, and after an eventless voyaging of one hundred years over strange seas of thought alone at last to have found a more or less hospitable harbor. To quote one scholar² who has reappraised several of the English revolutionary

¹ William Cobbett (New York, 1926), p. 25.

² George McLean Harper, *William Wordsworth: His Life, Works, and Influence* (London, 1916), I, 254.

thinkers of the period in the light of modern progressive radicalism: "The twentieth century seems to have linked itself more directly to the eighteenth than to the nineteenth, which lies between its neighbors like a great confused parenthesis."

The conventional attitude of the nineteenth century toward the revolutionary decade in England is shown in the apotheosis of Burke. It is no purpose here to disparage the idea of organic growth as the one according to which the political and social salvation of the world is to be worked out, but it is well to indicate something of the narrowness and incompleteness of such a view when adhered to exclusively. It should be better remembered that, while many of the English political radicals were in favor of the wildest philosophic schemes for the amelioration of society presented by the French Encyclopaedists, most of them were as unfavorable as Burke to the way in which those ideas were eventually carried out in the French Revolution. Already certain parts of the constructive thought of the early radicals, especially that defining the relation between the authority of government and the liberty of the individual, had found expression in the Constitution of the United States. The French ideal of individual liberty had inspired the writers of the Declaration of Independence. The problem of government is to keep this ideal consistent with the ideal of cooperation for the common good. The Encyclopaedists and their English disciples believed that, with reason enthroned in the individual, we need not bother about the common good, for what one under the influence of reason would consider good for one would be good for all. They taught that the kingdom of our political heaven is within

us, who are the creatures of reason; Burke, that it is without us, that is, that it is a thing of historical growth and not a thing of invention and reasoning from great fundamental principles. It is superfluous now to observe that if Burke's conception of the nature of the English government is inflexible, it is of the sort which allows tyranny as well as liberty to broaden slowly down from precedent to precedent.

On the other hand, whatever may be conceded as to the perverseness of the radical philosophers in too often assuming that whatever is, is wrong and ignoring the unchangeableness of human nature, they had the virtue of generous enthusiasm. The revolutionary philosophy has been too often considered apart from the feelings which accompanied it. The rationalism of the French Revolution, though often removed from life by abstract refinements, was accompanied by the unselfish spirit of humanity and by an expansion of mind and spirit which would not brook conventional restraints of expression and destroyed the old moulds of thought. It was this enthusiasm that lent such an impulse to imaginative literature at the end of the century and summoned up by its magic "sights more than youthful poets ever dreamed." "The study of English poetry of the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century," writes H. W. Garrod,³ "is only intelligible in the light of English political theory." The political radicalism of the period derived its strength, in so far as it found significant literary expression, from a passion for liberty and not from the success with which it forged its logical system. Thus is explained its literary significance as compared with the

³ *Wordsworth: Lectures and Essays* (Oxford, 1927), p. 68.

slight literary influence of the school of Bentham and of the parliamentary reformers who in 1832 achieved in large part what the radicals at the end of the century had fruitlessly fought for. These reformers were chastened by experience, a sense of limitation, and the exigencies of practical politics; imagination, therefore, had less room in which to move her wings.

But, after all, the essence of revolution consists not in the change that the mind of man impresses upon the outward form of events but in the change within the mind itself which precedes the birth of any great event and fertilizes the seeds of time. The French Revolution began in the mid-eighteenth century as a movement of mind. It had its roots in philosophy. It was an attempt to translate into reality the ideal world of human relationships which a generation of thinkers had built up. It grew from an endeavor to tap the source of wisdom and power in "man's unconquerable mind." This drama of thought and feeling, which is sometimes only faintly shadowed in the realm of immediate events, it is the business of literature to record. Politics, because it is so inextricably worked into the fabric of civilized life, because it appeals to such a range of human passions, because it attracts the best and the worst of men, because it is so blended with human frailties and godlike virtues, lends itself to the ends of pure literature better than philosophy or theology or science, no one of which has yet become "a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man." This is particularly true of the politics of the French Revolution.

The work of no literary period in English history has been more deeply affected by political discussion and an

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examination of the principles and conduct of government than the last decade of the eighteenth century. Around Burke's *Reflections* developed a whole literature of protest in defense of revolutionary principles. The *Reflections* may be regarded as a sort of literary nucleus of this period in which centers the bulk of the best political writing of the time. But besides this abundant prose pamphlet literature, odes, epics, philosophic poems, dramas, novels, letters from thoughtful observers of revolutionary France, journalistic essays, and treatises on political philosophy swell the mass of English revolutionary literature of the period. "Government and literature," wrote Matthias⁴ in 1798, "are now more than ever intimately connected." As indicated above, the period is all the more interesting and important from the point of view of literature because it departed from the accepted path of political improvement and disregarded sometimes completely the eighteenth century ideals of eminent respectability and common sense, though for the same reason it may be less interesting and important from the point of view of the political scientist, who is looking for the orderly evolution of government.

The period may be divided into two parts. The first part, to follow the guiding course of events in France, extends from the fall of the Bastille July 14, 1789 to the beginning of the Reign of Terror in the autumn of 1793; the second extends from the Reign of Terror to the end of the Directory June 18, 1799. To follow the reflection of these events in English politics and literature, the first part may be said to extend from the address of Dr. Richard Price, "On the Love of our Country," before the

⁴ *The Pursuits of Literature*, Introductory Letter.

meeting of the London Revolution Society November 4, 1789, to the state trials of the leaders of the London Corresponding Society in 1794; the second, from the state trials of 1794 to the suppression by name of the London Corresponding Society in 1799, which signalized the final complete triumph of a reactionary government over the forces of reform.

The first part of the period was full of optimism and unbounded hope. An almost universal belief in immediate progress excited the greatest enthusiasm and it required no special gift of prophecy in 1789 to see a glorious future unrolling before mankind. The optimistic temperament was especially characteristic of the early radicals before the Revolution lapsed into the stage of murder and violence. Distance from the theater of events but lent enchantment to their view and turned the Revolution into the theme of ideal liberty and fraternity and justice. Young men of vision saw England as well as France "standing at the top of golden hours." To men who lived outside the world of philosophic thought, the dry bones of speculation became clothed in the fair flesh of glorious accomplishment. The electric thrill which the fall of the Bastille communicated to men, high or low, who thought in terms of the welfare of the race set the whole civilized world tingling with expectation. The period between July 1789, when this hated monument of tyranny fell, and November 1790, when in Burke's *Reflections* the iridescent dreams of spontaneous enthusiasts were first "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," is perhaps the happiest in the memory of civilized man. Hazlitt a quarter of a century afterward thus pictured the ferment of life and hope that stirred these eventful years:

Scenes lovely as hope can paint dawned on the imagination; visions of unsullied bliss lulled the senses, and hid the darkness of surrounding objects, rising in bright succession and endless gradations, like the steps of the ladder which was once set up on earth, and whose top reached to heaven. Nothing was too mighty for this new begotten hope: and the path that led to human progress seemed as plain—as the pictures in the Pilgrim's Progress leading to Paradise. Imagination was unable to keep up with the gigantic strides of reason, and the strongest faith fell short of the supposed reality . . . The curb of prudence was taken off; nor was it thought that a zeal for what was right could be carried to excess.⁵

The mind of awakened man went a-venturing and youth found its romance in radicalism. No new world swimming into the ken of an Elizabethan adventurer brought him visions more romantic, more mind-expanding, or more fraught with the immediacy of prophecy, than the French Revolution, before its original purity was sullied by the baser passions, gave to statesmen and reformers, philosophers and poets.

While among these enthusiasts of the early Revolution perspectives were naturally yet to be corrected and hopes were yet to be squared with the requirements which a prudential world lays upon all high and noble enthusiasm, this first literary impulse of the Revolution in England was destined to set up a succession of waves of revolutionary poetry that beat upon the shores of English thought for the next thirty-five years.

⁵ *Mémoirs of Thomas Holcroft*, re-edited by Elbridge Colby, as *The Life of Thomas Holcroft* (London, 1925), II, 92.

But the morning of promise for the friends of the French Revolution in England was to be succeeded by a noon of disillusionment in which the elements of the emancipating philosophy of the Revolution were all but melted in the fervent heat of government persecution, and by an evening of calumny and triumphant tyranny that descended like a funeral pall upon the hopes of all but the stoutest-hearted. This outcome of course is to be attributed to several causes. It was due in part to the imprudence into which the passion for liberty often led its enthusiasts; in part to the innate conservatism of the character of the English, who were piqued by the boldness with which French revolutionary thought presumed to prescribe for them; in part to the somewhat rude jostling of middle class prejudices and respectability by the proselyting infidelity of men like Paine; in part to the restrictions which national patriotism combined with a state of war lays upon all liberal ideas; and in part to the deliberate persecution of a government which, in the opinions of many, resorted to the policy of repressing reform as a mere machination to keep in power. Of the first three causes Burke naturally made the most in his *Reflections*.

For even a sketch of this reaction there is not space here. It took various forms: popular demonstrations such as the "Church and King" riots at Birmingham in 1791, which were motivated by bitter prejudice against the Dissenters in general as well as by antipathy against the devastating infidelity and destructive political philosophy of men like Paine; repressive measures directed against freedom of speech and meeting, particularly of the radical political societies like the London Corresponding

Society and their final complete suppression in 1799; independent efforts apart from the government's to organize public sentiment against the radicals; the government's maintenance of the abominable spy system for lack of an organized detective force; a series of disgraceful trials of radicals culminating in the famous state trials of 1794, which ended in the acquittal of Hardy, Tooke, and Thelwall and the release of Holcroft but did not end their persecution; a blanket statute of 1800 forbidding all combinations of workingmen.⁶

Whether Pitt was merely playing a deep political game or whether he was really deceived into thinking that the reformers menaced the existence of the state has been the subject of considerable controversy among students of political history. Laprade, in his *England and the French Revolution*, attributes the agitation of the radicals exclusively to conditions at home and denies that the societies' source of inspiration was the French Revolution. He has thus practically ignored their communications with the French. He regards the prosecution of the reformers and the political societies, not as a matter of conviction, but as a pure matter of policy on the part of Pitt, by means of which in arousing a wave of patriotic sentiment he continued to stay in power. It was not the result of an actual panic of fear that the country was threatened with revolution. According to this writer, the entire affair at Birmingham was but a part of the Pitt propaganda to keep in power, and so were most of the demonstrations against reformers. The cause of the growth of hostility was not so much Burke's influence as the deliberate effort of Pitt's adherents to secure his political advantage. The split between Burke and Fox over the regency question and the menace of the Revolution provided Pitt a chance to divide the Whig opposition. He, therefore, adopted Burke's theories, though he had at first refused to assent to the principles of the *Reflections*. Under the stimulus of territorial ambition he had forced France to declare war with Holland and England. Then he used the supposed propaganda for the French Revolution in England as one of his pretexts for a struggle with France.

A second interpretation, that he was actually alarmed but misled both by the people and by his own spies, who instigated inconsequential talk about using force, is more generally accepted, as in

The triumph of reaction was complete with the Napoleonic shadow lowering over all; and the forces of reform entered upon a journey of nearly forty years in the wilderness, their leaders either silenced or won to the opposition or driven out of the country. Not only reform in Parliament but the abolition of the slave trade and the equality of religions before the law were as issues absolutely laid asleep. And to this had the hopes of the French Revolution in England come. The state of depression into which most high and generous-minded men had fallen at the end of the century is pathetically shown in the eloquent lamentation of Hazlitt:

Kind feelings and generous actions there always have been, and there aways will be, while the intercourse of men shall endure; but the hope, that such feelings and such actions might become universal, rose and set with the French Revolution. That light seems to have been

Veitch's *Genesis of Parliamentary Reform*. A third view accepts the surface interpretation that Pitt really was facing a general uprising, that he neither intrigued nor was deceived, and that therefore the reformers were guilty of the charges brought against them and planned the use of force. This view is upheld by Whibley in his *Life of William Pitt*. In evidence it is an untenable now as in 1794. A fourth view reduces the severity of this one to the belief that the reformers, if not guilty of treason, were guilty of seditious activities and contemplated using force. This is presented by W. P. Hall in his *British Radicalism, 1791-1797*. Philip Anthony Brown, in his *The French Revolution and English History*, takes the composite position that Pitt and his friends "mixed precautions against a danger genuinely feared, with attempts to use panic as an instrument of state" (page 133) and that the responsible leaders of the reform societies did not wish to use force, his general vindication not covering a few doubtful cases. This appears nearest the truth.

For a succinct account of the advance and retreat of radicalism during the revolutionary decade, see Crane Brinton, *A Decade of Revolution, 1789-1799*, New York, 1934, pp. 164-174.

extinguished forever in this respect. The French Revolution was the only match that ever took place between philosophy and experience: and waking from the trance of theory to the sense of reality, we hear the words, *truth, reason, virtue, liberty*, with the same indifference or contempt, that the cynic who has married a jilt or a termagant, listens to the rhapsodies of lovers.⁷

But men of sturdier spirit and deeper conviction continued their search for truth consistently toward the goal set for themselves at the dawn of the Revolution and, though the cause was lost for their generation, persevered to the end. The radical literature of the period of reaction was given less than previously to ecstatic contemplation and philosophic schemes for human perfection but more to a grim defense of conviction against the overwhelming odds of organized prejudice and the power of a government that set itself to the ruthless extermination of reform. The radicals, compelled to retreat, could throw their rear guard only into action and the government and the conservatives, safely entrenched again behind the bulwarks of established institutions, sent after them only the auxiliaries and light-armed forces of ridicule and satire and calumny.⁸ Of these the *Anti-Jacobin* led the pack. A satirist who joined in this hue and cry against the liberals wrote in 1798: "The objects of public regret and offense are now so numerous and so complicated that all the milder offices of the Muse have lost their influence and attraction."⁸ But the weapon of scorn when wielded skilfully is more effective than a whole panoply of conventional arms. The radicals' more obvious

⁷ *Memoirs of Thomas Holcroft*, II, 93.

⁸ Thomas J. Mathias, *op. cit.*

violations of common sense were stressed and their human failing disproportionately emphasized. To brand ideals thus on account of their extravagancies or of the imperfect human instruments by which their attainment was attempted is like dwelling upon the ugliness of the gargoyles and ignoring the beauty of the cathedral. The consequence of this campaign of vilification, aided by the natural popular reaction against the excesses of the Revolution and carried far beyond the period when there was any possible danger to the state, was that the leaders of the lost cause sank into an obscurity and that their names were covered by an obloquy which were entirely undeserved. Charles Cestre writes :

L'histoire même, souvent injuste pour les vaincus, aveuglée d'ailleurs par les préjugés réactionnaires qui sévirent après la Révolution française, à jete sur eux un discredit immérité.⁹

Now one hundred years after the deaths of most of them they are coming to be better known than a few years afterwards and the world, thanks to the impartial spirit of research, is beginning to realize how pitifully little it has understood them and valued their lives.

i It is the purpose in the following essays to rediscover and evaluate the importance in the history of the human spirit and its expression in literature of certain of these all but forgotten personalities and to illuminate the revolutionary phases in the careers of others better known. Though neglected now, the former were not undistinguished in their day; but, what is of more importance, they provided a large part of the *milieu* in which such

⁹ *La Révolution Française et les Poètes Anglais* (Paris, 1906), p. 36.

philosophers as Godwin, such popular leaders as Paine, and such poets as the youthful Wordsworth and Coleridge moved. The investigation is confined roughly to the generation of the Revolution, more particularly to the first decade of this generation, and attempts to cut a sort of revolutionary cross-section through the lives and writings of these men and women.]

[Any classification of the writers making up this *milieu* must be considered as very fluid. At least four groups may be faintly distinguished, though they are not at all mutually exclusive.]

[The first group may be called the political romanticists. They looked upon the French Revolution principally as a great adventure in human liberty and were disposed to accept its philosophy with all its implications. They were sometimes led into extravagant notions by their ardent enthusiasm. They were not organizers. They were interested first of all in preserving their own spirits. They knew little of social forces. They were passionate individualists, not revolutionists in the Marxian sense. With some of them the French Revolution merely provided an outlet for the overflow of youthful spirits or a subject which appealed to their naturally sanguine temperaments. Some in contemplation of its promise passed into a sort of transcendental fervor which rather ignored the limitations of human nature. Some whose convictions were not very deep early passed to the conservative side, not being able to distinguish the true revolutionary cause from the projects of its unworthy instruments. Some fought on through persecution and obloquy for conscience' sake and, in spite of a world in arms against them, kept their faith in ultimate victory unimpaired. Some

of them, their contact with the Revolution being close, wrote under the very impact of events and with immediacy of comprehension. With some, revolutionary sentiment was only an effervescent enthusiasm which cooled when the real test of conviction came. But for all of them France "held the attractions of a country in romance," and the Revolution provided a release into uncharted and irresistibly fascinating regions of thought.

Their best work is marked by brilliance and infectious zeal rather than profundity. So of course it is not always sane. ¶But, literature, because it is interested in all human values—all the vagaries as well as the tangible projects of the political animal called man, often delights to concern itself with matters which may be considered beneath the dignity of political science—or political theory. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* is just as truly an expression of the political man as Burke's *Reflections* or Quintillian's *Institutes*. Now, the young men and women who were seeing visions during the revolutionary era were men and women of feeling who did not bother much about clarifying their ideas, though they talked and wrote about them until their heads whirled. The benevolent nature of men, they were sure, if allowed free play, would leave very little for his intellectual self to worry about. As to ways and means, which were after all incidental, the hard-headed practitioners of government could attend to them. Though Godwin's *Political Justice* was the main arsenal of their ideas, they were completely lacking in Godwin's philosophic calm.)

| To this group belong the following writers here treated: Joel Barlow,¹⁰ Mary Hays, Mrs. Mary Robinson, Robert Lovell, and George Burnett. To it also belong Helen Maria Williams,¹¹ Robert Merry,¹² and indeed most of the bright young men who hailed the "divine effulgence" of liberty in 1789. |

| The political romanticists were the most spontaneous in their expression of revolutionary sympathy. Their admiration was, like that of most observers during the early stages of the Revolution, to a large extent unsuspecting and uncritical. But when Burke launched his *Reflections* against its conduct and the political philosophy of which he regarded it the expression, and gave his interpretation of the nature and permanence of the English Revolution of 1688, a reasoned defense of the revolutionary faith, as well of its implications about the rights of English citizens to change their form of government was demanded. This the second group, which I have chosen to call the political controversialists, supplied. |

When Burke published his *Reflections* he seems to have imperfectly judged the real extent of latent revolutionary sentiment in England or the significance of the radical philosophy in the thought of his time. The break with Fox and the Whigs in early 1790 had lessened his contact with liberal thinkers. The revolutionary radicals were

10 I have included Barlow here because the radical middle part of his career (1788-1805), the whole of which he spent abroad, is associated with English rather than American life and literature and all his radical publications were issued in England.

11 See the present author's study, "Helen Maria Williams and the French Revolution," *Harper Presentation Volume* (Princeton, 1939).

12 See especially his *The Laurel of Liberty* (1790).

not to be so cavalierly and contemptuously dismissed as he thought. The scattered notes of discontent soon swelled into a steady and well modulated chorus as liberal-thinking men and women came to feel the full import of the *Reflections*. The Whig liberals, the radicals, the Dissenters, and even the more or less unprincipled malcontents were indulged with the relief for which Job prayed under the affliction of calumny: their adversary had written a book. Burke's book aggravated the very evils which it had so elaborately warned against; it stimulated discussion of the rights of man and led many to the brink of sedition. In fact, practically every writer disposed toward free-thinking in politics attacked Burke at one time or another, however incidentally. The number of deliberate answers written to the *Reflections* shows better than anything else how the revolutionary sentiment had become deeply as well as generally diffused. Prior, Burke's biographer, writes that he counted thirty-eight which came within a few months after its publication. [This mass of writing, with the exception of Paine's *Rights of Man* and Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae*, does not rank high in pure literary merit, but it does bulk large in English literary history and in the background of national thought upon which was projected the great work of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's prime.]

Mackintosh is made to represent the group here. At least a dozen other replies are well above the average level of the literature of pamphleteering. Among them are those of Mary Wollstonecroft,¹³ Henry Mackenzie,¹⁴

13 *Vindication of the Rights of Man* (1790).

14 *Letters of Brutus*, No. 2 (1790).

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Capell Lofft,¹⁵ Sir Brooke Boothby,¹⁶ Mrs. Catherine Macauley,¹⁷ David Williams,¹⁸ and Thomas Christie.¹⁹

¹⁵The third group are the Dissenters. They carried on through the revolutionary era the English liberal tradition as it had been previously represented by Richard Price and Joseph Priestly, made more aggressive under the stimulation of the emancipation of the French people from ecclesiastical despotism. These writers in general were a balancing force against the atheism and infidelity which militated against the popularity of the radical cause. But apart from their religious beliefs many of them were confirmed Godwinians. Much of their animus was directed against the Pitt government for failure to repeal the obnoxious Test Act and against the ecclesiastical dignitaries of the Establishment, who considered their prestige endangered by the dissemination of radical ideas!

Now the proposal for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts happened to be made at the very time the new constitution in France was being promulgated with its Declaration of the Rights of Man, which declared all citizens equal in their eligibility for positions in the state and all free from molestation for political opinion. The contrast between the privileges of the enfranchised French Catholics and the disabled English Protestants became painfully evident. The Dissenters' open admiration for

¹⁵*Remarks on the Letter of the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke concerning the Revolution in France* (1790).

¹⁶*A Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (1790).

¹⁷*Observations on the Reflections of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke on the Revolution in France* (1790).

¹⁸*Lessons to a Young Prince* (1790).

¹⁹*Letters on the French Revolution* (1791).

the French Revolution, or rather their confidently expressed hope for the same measure of tolerance established by the Revolution in France, led the greater part of the established clergy to join the higher classes in viewing the Revolution with great jealousy. In the corporate commercial towns, which were always the strongholds of the Protestant Dissenters, the aristocratic and democratic classes corresponded closely with the Church and the Dissenting parties, respectively. The Dissenter, then, looked upon royalty as the ally of the Established Church, stood for the rights of Parliament against the royal prerogative, and were naturally drawn toward republican ideas.]

]But the opposition of Dissenters to the government did not arise exclusively from their legal disabilities. Dissent had a close affinity in its philosophy with that of the Revolution. Calvinism, or dissent of the stricter sort, was rather thinly masked in much of the fundamentals of the Godwinian philosophy. The idea that character is the product of circumstance, not the inner expression of the individual, and the idea that the independence of the individual mind is inviolate by all external authority, are simply the transposed and exaggerated Calvinistic doctrines of determinism and the absolute autonomy of the individual soul. Godwin's teaching that men have no rights but only duties, has a distinctly Calvinistic tinge. Many of the radical thinkers, like Godwin, retained the logical method of Calvinism even while renouncing its tenets. But one great difference between Calvinism and the radical philosophy is that the former disparaged the importance of man and cultivated a pessimistic outlook upon life while the latter exalted man and generated a generous optimism.]

Of the Dissenters, Richard Price and Joseph Priestley²⁰, belonged to the pioneer older generation. Among the most stalwart of their younger confreres were Gilbert Wakefield, John Aikin, Mrs. A. L. Barbauld, William Frend, Robert Hall, William Taylor²¹ of Norwich, and Joseph Fawcett, who is here the object of special attention.¹

The fourth group, more miscellaneous and nondescript than the others, may be called the milder radicals or the Whig liberals. In the two final essays George Dyer and Samuel Parr are associated principally with this group. Other members are James Montgomery, Richard Payne Knight, and Thomas Beddoes.²² In religion many of

20 Priestley, perhaps the best known of all the English liberals at the end of the eighteenth century and certainly the most versatile and voluminous, had also written a cogent reply to Burke (*Letters to Burke*, 1791); but he wrote it primarily as a Dissenter, centering his attack upon Burke's arguments for the civil establishment of religion.

21 See especially the following works of the six writers just named: Gilbert Wakefield, *Address to the Inhabitants of Nottingham* (1789), *Inquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of Public Worship* (1791), *Reply to Burke's Letter to a Noble Lord* (1796), *Reply to ... the Bishop of Llandaff's Address* (1798); John Aikin, *Address to the Dissenters of England* (1790), *Poems* (1791), *Letters from a Father to His Son*, Vol. I, Nos. V, XX, XXI (1791); Mrs. Barbauld, *Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (1790); William Frend, *Peace and Union* (1793); Robert Hall, *Christianity Consistent with a Love of Freedom* (1791), *Apology for the Freedom of the Press and for General Liberty* (1793); William Taylor, *A Contribution to the Theory of Representation* (1789). Much of the radical writing of this group appeared in numerous articles, many anonymous, of the *Monthly Review*, the *Monthly Magazine*, and the *Annual Review*.

22 Most of Montgomery's radical writings appeared in the *Sheffield Register* and the *Sheffield Iris* between 1792 and 1795. See also Richard Payne Knight, *The Progress of Civil Society* (1796); Thomas Beddoes, *A Word in Defense of the Bill of Rights* (1795), *An Essay on the Public Merits of Mr. Pitt* (1796).

them, like Dyer, were Dissenters. But their convictions were not firm enough or their temperaments were not sanguine enough to make them religious or political evangelists of the cause. Their enthusiasm never reached the point of contagion and their opinions were always cautiously expressed so as not to cause offense. Some of them lived in the polite world, valued radicalism as much for the intellectual stimulation derived from it as for anything else, looked down with condescending tolerance upon the fiery agitators for reform, and limited their participation in the radical program to the amenities of the club or the dinner table.²⁷

But for all their apparent harmlessness, they entertained ideas disturbing enough to keep themselves from being considered within the pale of the safe and sane. In fact, some of them were victims of the indiscriminate persecution of the Tory government. Though they were allies of Fox, they were too near the periphery of the left of Whigism to be entrusted, had they desired it, with the practical shaping of political policy against the Pitt government. But their dissent was moderate enough and their intellectual standing respectable enough that what Burke is reported to have aid about Fox in 1792 might apply to all of them:

Charles Fox can never internally like the French Revolution . . . In himself, if he should find no other objection to it, he has at least too much taste for a revolution.²⁸

²³ *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, edited by W. C. Ward (London, 1842-6), V, 316.

22 LITERARY BACKGROUNDS OF ENGLISH RADICALISM

In claiming the privileges of Man Thinking, they never threw off the yoke of authority and discipline so completely that they forgot the difference—which some of the political romanticists never learned—between the grudging consent of the slave and the willing obedience of the free. In general, then, they supplied a balance for the more extreme of the political romanticists and their solid base of temperament retained for them a certain respectability which otherwise they would have forfeited by their ideas.

CHAPTER II

JOEL BARLOW, POLITICAL ROMANTICIST

UNTIL recently most writers on Joel Barlow have dwelt upon the early American part of his career and upon his abortive attempts to enshrine the glory of his native country in an epic poem, to the neglect of his long sojourn abroad as a citizen of the world and of his revolutionary writings.¹ His biographer, Charles Burr Todd, devoted comparatively little attention to this portion of his life and work and chose to regard him primarily as "the pioneer of American poetry" and one of "the great leaders of Republicanism in America." Within the last few years his fame has been reassessed with more nearly a due proportion of emphasis upon the European aspects of his career.¹ This study is an attempt to trace his connection

1 The Joel Barlow Commemoration at Redding, Conn., June 22, 1935, touched all the facets of his many-sided life, but its feature was the address of the French ambassador. Victor Clyde Miller, in his monograph, *Joel Barlow, Revolutionist, London, 1791-92* (Hamburg, 1932), has told the story of Barlow's second visit to London. His special contributions to the subject are his assembling of information about Barlow in the Public Records Office and of manuscript material in the British Museum, his elaboration upon the influence of Paine on *Advice to the Privileged Orders*, his analysis of the *Letter to the National Convention* in the light of the Constitution of the United States and of the French constitutions of 1791 and 1793, and his careful survey of bibliographical data belonging to the period. Miller has not, however, dealt fully with Barlow's more purely personal contacts. Maria Dell' Isola has written of him as the herald of the League of Nations ("Joel Barlow, Précurseur de la Société des Nations," *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, Paris, April-June, 1934). T. A. Zunder, who has competently canvassed his early life to the last

with political radicalism particularly in France and England at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. "It is this later Barlow," as V. L. Parrington remarks,² "completely new outfitted by French romantic tailors, that after years remember." "The kindly thing," writes Russell Blankenship,³ "is to remember Barlow as a lover of freedom and an ardent advocate of universal education and to forget his heavy-handed toying with poetry." I shall accordingly treat of his poetry only in so far as it was made the vehicle of revolutionary ideas. It is notable, however, that in these portions he comes nearest to true inspiration!

Barlow's prose, most of which was written during the years spent abroad, has given to him fully as secure a claim to literary distinction as his poetry. It bristles with

detail in his *The Early Days of Joel Barlow* (New Haven, 1934), promises as thorough a treatment of his later career. John Dos Passos, in the chapter "Citizen Barlow of the Republic of the World" of *The Ground We Stand On: Some Examples from the History of a Political Creed* (New York, 1941), has written a zestful story of Barlow's adventures abroad but with little attention to his ideas as such. Instead of the picture of a man whose ideas are basic in the establishment of the democratic faith and in the development of political liberalism in America, especially as it was presented to the Old World, we are here given a somewhat flippant portrait of "a man who never turned down a trip if he could help it." And yet Dos Passos professes to be giving Barlow's testament of faith in democracy and to be thinking of him as an example of the men of the American past who "in spite of hell and high water... managed to live for and establish some few liberties." Leon Howard in his "Joel Barlow and Napoleon" (*The Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, II, 37-51, Oct. 1938) and especially in the chapter "Citizen Joel Barlow" of his *The Connecticut Wits* (Chicago, 1943) has given a much more balanced account of his later life and writings.

2 *Main Currents in American Thought* (New York, 1928), I, 383.

3 *American Literature* (New York, 1931), p. 189.

his democratic convictions and is entirely free of the cumbersome paraphernalia of expression which make his poetry so labored and artificial. As a prose writer he is like Paine in the impetuosity of his onslaught upon tyranny of whatever sort, in his pamphleteering ability, and in his saturation with the gospels of reason, optimism, and universal benevolence. Yet his prose has been rarely appraised by literary historians and has been singularly neglected by the anthologists. Even his *Advice to the Privileged Orders* has been so little known that two writers⁴ on Barlow have referred to it as though it were a poem.

No other American of importance came to know so much of the French Revolution at first hand. His friend and classmate Josiah Meigs wrote to him upon his return to America: "I consider you as bringing to us more valuable information than any native American has ever returned from Europe with."⁵ His residence of more than thirteen years in France was coincident with the era of the Revolution. The fervor of his nature, to which it appears that his earlier conservatism had not allowed full play,⁶ was released and the heady liquor of revolution

4 A. C. Baldwin, "Joel Barlow," *The New Englander*, XXXII, 413-437 (July, 1873); and Vernon C. Squires, "Joel Barlow—Patriot, Democrat, and Man of Letters," *Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota*, IX, 299-308 (July, 1919).

5 Unpublished letter of Dec. 22, 1805, in the Pequot Library, Southport, Conn.

6 "The associations which he had formed in Paris combined with innate tendencies which had long been latent to make him an avowed liberal in religion and republican in political sympathies" (F. B. Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of Graduates of Yale College*, New York, 1907, IV, 5). See also T. A. Zunder, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74, 103-105, 144, 168.

made him an ardent romanticist in politics. He wrote, then, with the knowledge but not with the detachment necessary for calm historical appraisal. ¹ He himself in his unpublished *Notes for a History of the French Revolution*,⁷ written apparently about 1797, has given us just such a portrait of himself as a political romanticist :

No man can pretend to have seen it all. Some have been too near, others too far off, some blinded by their interests, or prejudices, others rendered indifferent from their want of sensibility; and no man can say that he does not belong to one of these classes . . . For myself, I partake of the disabilities and advantages of these [first] three classes without having anything in common with the fourth . . . It would be difficult for a native to have an acquaintance more particular and at the same time more general than mine has been, especially with several who began the business and directed its first and most characteristic movements.

His adventures began with his coming to Paris in June, 1788, as the agent of a land company, later proved fraudulent, to sell lands and enlist immigrants, it being thought, especially after the beginning of the Revolution, "that many Frenchmen of the more cultivated and prosperous classes would be induced to take up permanent abode in America, now that cultivation and prosperity were such blots on their 'scutcheons at home.'" ⁸ ¹ With Barlow was

⁷ This document is in the "Barlow Papers," MSS Am. 507, in the Harvard College Library. For the privilege of quotation from this collection I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. S. L. M. Barlow, its present owner. The larger part of the collection was made by Lemuel G. Olmstead, grand-nephew of Joel Barlow.

⁸ Charles Downer Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution* (Baltimore, 1897), p. 144.

associated the Scotchman William Playfair, an ardent early revolutionist who assisted in the capture of the Bastille but who soon turned violently reactionary and wrote his *History of Jacobinism* (1796) against his former confederates.⁹ Brissot, the traveller and revolutionary leader, was, according to Barlow's biographer, evidently associated with the same company.¹⁰ The agents met with flattering success among both the middle and the higher orders. Barlow wrote to his wife on January 1, 1790:

Many respectable and wealthy families are now making their purchases and are going this spring; among whom are several noble men & some members of the National Assembly . . . If the first 100 people find themselves happy, the stream of immigration will be irresistible; they may be followed by a million of European settlers into the western country.¹¹

9 John G. Alger, *Englishmen in the French Revolution* (London, 1889), pp. 10-11.

10 Charles Burr Todd, *Life and Letters of Joel Barlow* (New York, 1886), pp. 62, 70. Brissot's *Nouveau Voyage* (Paris, 1791), translated by Barlow the following year, with its picture of the free and happy life beyond the seas, led many Frenchmen of the middle class to migrate to America later. For an account of Brissot's activity in stimulating American colonization schemes, see Appendix A, "On the Origin and Development of Pantisocracy," of J. R. MacGillivray's *Wordsworth and his Revolutionary Acquaintances* (1930), an unpublished Harvard dissertation. For a general treatment of Brissot as the "great apostle of Americanism in France," see Bernard Fay, *The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America: A Study of the Moral and Intellectual Relations between France and America at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1927), pp. 237-244, 285-286, 320-321.

11 Unpublished letter in the "Barlow Papers."

His friend John Trumbull remarked to Oliver Wolcott with as much truth as facetiousness on "The Visions of Barlow." Soon the unscrupulous character of the company's speculations became evident.¹² Barlow was, however, exonerated of conscious complicity. The best evidence of his essential innocence is that Volney, although he found reprehensible "that trite, idle, and inflated rhetoric which has condemned five hundred meritorious families to hardship and misery,"¹³ continued to hold Barlow in the highest esteem for the rest of his life. However, his associates in America attempted to throw all the odium of failure upon him, as he thought, on account of his conversion to extreme republicanism. When the land company failed him, he turned to his pen for support.

In the meantime travel and political intercourse had brought him into contact with many of the leading minds of the new dispensation. He had come to France armed with letters of introduction from Washington to Lafayette and Rochambeau. Jefferson, then minister to France, presented him to the nobility and to literary and

12 A body of immigrants arrived in America in 1790 to find that the company had no title to the lands, and after several dispossession were finally in 1795 granted territory by Congress in the section where Gallipolis, Ohio, now stands. For full accounts of the enterprise, see Theodore T. Belote, *The Scioto Speculation and the French Settlement at Gallipolis*, 1907, Series 2, Vol. III, No. 3 of the *University Studies* of the University of Cincinnati; and J. G. Rozengarten, *French Colonists and Exiles in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1907). C. F. Volney, in his *View of the Soil and Climate of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1804), gives the history of the expedition as told by some of its survivors in 1795, when he visited Gallipolis and "was struck with its forlorn appearance."

13 *Op. cit.*, p. 329.

ecclesiastical dignitaries of the court. On July 12, 1788, he was off to London, where he spent nearly three months. A friendly reception awaited him there from Dr. Richard Price, with whom he had been in correspondence before leaving America.¹⁴ It is evident from this that he had early been attracted into the orbits of the more liberal English thinkers on the eve of the revolutionary era.

The journal of this first visit to England, portions only of which have been published by Todd, is preserved in two notebooks of the "Barlow Papers." It shows both the practical bent of his mind which was to make him later a kindred spirit with Robert Fulton, and the democratic sympathies which were soon to ripen into the downright philosophy of revolution. He was attracted by various mechanical exhibitions, from harpoons and mangles to steamboat models. And the first authentic record extant of his association with Thomas Paine is in an entry for August 26: "Mr. Paine, the author of *Common Sense*, has shown me the modle [sic] of his iron bridge. The king of France will probably employ him to build one over the Siene[sic] & the king of England over the Thames." But that their initial common interests went beyond

14 In 1786 Barlow had sent to Dr. Price by John Adams a manuscript copy of *The Vision of Columbus* and asked his advice about publishing it in England. In a letter of Feb. 4, 1787, he had advised against its publication there because of "the Dedication to the King of France, the encomiums on France and the American army, and the censures of this country." On March 24, 1788, Price wrote that he had "taken care to convey to Mr. Hayley and to Mr. Day the copies you directed to them." For the text of these letters, see T. A. Zunder, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-229. The originals are in the "Barlow Papers" and in the Pequot Library, respectively.

bridges is evident from an entry for August 29: Dined at Mr. Vaughan's with Mr. Paine, Mr. Tooke & several other English Gen!¹⁵.

No man of liberal tendencies could have talked in 1788 with Horne Tooke, then in the thick of the fight for parliamentary reform, without having his heart moved as by a trumpet. In fact, Barlow saw the famous Westminster election of 1788 perpetrated upon the people and gave a vivid and indignant picture of the corruption and bribery then accepted as a matter of course in English politics. In the entry for August 4, he writes:

The voters on such a street or parish . . . breakfast with such a duke or lord and proceed with him to the polls. Thus he puts himself upon a level with the most ragged, vile, and worthless of creation, who move in a tumultuous procession through the streets, reeling and huzzaing, with his Grace or the candidate at their head . . . When we hear in common language that such a duke sends *sixteen members to Parliament*, and that such a gentleman has *bought a borough*, what shall we think of the political freedom of this people?¹⁶

As yet it is noticeable that he writes as the somewhat proud and condescending American constitutionalist before the access of revolutionary fervor had warmed his blood. In the journal entry for October 3, we read:

¹⁵ These passages were first published by T. A. Zunder in his "Notes on the Friendship of Joel Barlow and Tom Paine," *American Book Collector*, VI, 96-97 (March, 1935). Zunder here presents evidence, though he himself discounts it, that Barlow and Paine had previously met in America.

¹⁶ Quoted by C. B. Todd, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.

I presume there are not to be found five men in Europe who understand the nature of liberty and the theory of government so well as they are understood by five hundred men in America. The friends to America in London and Paris are astonished at our conduct in adopting the New Constitution. They are as intemperate in their idea of liberty as we were in the year seventy-five.¹⁷

And yet he observes that the fact that "one sixth of the kingdom lies in heath" is due in part to "the sacred rights of private property." He argues for a more democratic use of the public domain. Of Richmond Gardens he writes: "The only objections to them are the expense, & the vast quantities of ground that they occupy, part of which might be employed in raising men instead of shrubs."¹⁸

Barlow soon began to chafe under the restraints of American constitutionalism. His association on the eve of the Revolution with Lafayette and with such Girondist leaders as Volney, Garat, La Harpe, and Laplace, to whom he was introduced by Jefferson, and with the French *literati*, influenced him much toward liberalism in religion and politics. The direct influence of Jefferson himself was probably not without weight. The birth of the Revolution, which he saw in all its horrors and all its ecstasies, completed his conversion. Unfortunately, however, only a few letters written in 1789 are extant and these yield us little specific information about the impact of public events. On July 28, for example, he wrote his wife, then

17 Quoted by C. B. Todd, *op. cit.*, p. 84. See also the partly unpublished entry for Aug. 4, 1788.

18 Unpublished entry for Aug. 19, 1788. See also the unpublished entry for Oct. 11, 1788.

still in America, with quiet confidence in the eventual reformation of the world through what he had witnessed:

All the cruel things which you see published, however horrible, however cruel, however just, however noble, memorable, and important in their consequences, have passed under my eye, and it is really no small gratification to me to have seen two complete revolutions in favor of liberty. . . . I look upon the affairs of this nation as on the point of being settled on the most rational and lasting foundation . . . Nothing but the contemplation of the infinite happiness that I am sure will result to millions of human beings from these commotions could enable me to tolerate the observance of them.¹⁹

His intimate acquaintance with Grégoire, the revolutionary bishop, and with Condorcet strengthened his conversion, though for the larger part of the first year of the Revolution he was absorbed by the colonizing enterprise.

On July 10, 1790, Barlow and Paul Jones, with ten other Americans, came as a deputation from their countrymen in Paris before the National Assembly and presented to them a congratulatory address, soliciting admission to the festival of the Revolution on the Champs de Mars. The style of the address suggests that it was probably drawn up by Barlow himself, though it was delivered by William Henry Vernon. In it the belief was expressed.

that the nations would emerge from their lethargy and would claim the rights of men with a voice that could not be stifled; . . . that the luxury and passion of ruling

¹⁹ Quoted by C. B. Todd, *op. cit.*, p. 87. Todd has incorrectly given the date of this letter as July 20. The original is in the Pequot Library.

would lose their illusory charm; that those chiefs, those kings, those gods of the earth, would renounce the idolatrous distinctions lavished upon them, in order to mingle with their fellow citizens and rejoice at their happiness.²⁰

The next day Barlow wrote to his wife: "We made yesterday our wonderful address to the Nat'l Assembly—such thunderclaps of applause never were heard."²¹ Four days later he wrote to her of the famous first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille: "The great scene of yesterday . . . was the sublimest ever presented to man I am sure."²² Todd tells us that Barlow left Paris for London in the spring of 1791 because "the enormities of the Jacobins rendered residence there unsafe."²³ But this is a doubtful explanation. While at this time the bourgeoisie were separating from the masses and while the extreme Left took heart after the death of Mirabeau in early April, the Jacobins did not resort to violence until July 17 in the so-called Massacre of the Champs de Mars. Moreover, Barlow was, as we shall see, in and about Paris much of the time during the Terror. It is more likely that he was originally drawn to London for this visit on business or perhaps to escape the difficulties in which he had become involved with the land company. The agents were then quarreling among themselves and

²⁰ For the full text of this address, and the reply of the president of the Assembly, see John G. Alger, *Glimpses of the French Revolution* (London, 1894), pp. 111-114. The French version of the Americans' address is in the "Barlow Papers."

²¹ Unpublished letter in the "Barlow Papers."

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Op. cit.*, p. 93.

Barlow's connection with them was growing very tenuous.²⁴ However, the protracting of his stay was undoubtedly due to his enlistment as an active propagandist in the movement for political reform.

No sooner was he there than he affiliated himself with members of the flourishing London Constitutional Society, the best known of the organizations aiming at political reform, in the work of which he soon became intimate with such liberal political and literary leaders as Horne Tooke, Joseph Priestley, John Thelwall, Thomas Holcroft, Jeremiah Joyce, Robert Merry, and William Haley.²⁵ His political essays were given the full approval of the society and he was formally made a member with James Mackintosh in March, 1792, his name having been proposed by Horne Tooke.

In 1792 he met William Godwin, and the philosopher records in his diary for this year that Barlow was one of a group with whom he discussed the principles of *Political Justice* before its publication:

24 See unpublished letters from Barlow to Abraham Baldwin of May 3 and Oct. 17, 1791, in the "Barlow Papers." In the latter he wrote: "I have done with all ideas of pushing Scioto any further."

25 Hayley in particular had sought an introduction to Barlow through their common friend, Dr. John Warner, and had hailed him in a burst of epistolary verse. See the unpublished letter from Hayley to Warner in the Pequot Library. In this collection there are three unpublished letters from Hayley to Barlow belonging to this period. In one of Oct. 23, 1792, Hayley thanks him for a copy of the *Letter to the National Convention*, "which, though I am *not yet a Republican*, I have read with great pleasure. It is full of reason and philanthropy." This letter is interesting, too, for its account of Hayley's early intimacy with Cowper. For Hayley's story of a visit from Warner and Barlow, see Hayley's letter quoted in V. C. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

During this year I was in the singular situation of an author possessing some degree of fame for a work still unfinished and unseen. I was introduced on this ground to Mr. Mackintosh, David Williams, Joel Barlow, and others, and with these gentlemen, together with a Mr. Nicholson and Mr. Holcroft, had occasional meetings in which the principles of my work were discussed.

Another entry for this year runs: "Tea at Barlow's with Wollstonecraft [*sic*] and Holcroft. Talk of self-love, sympathy, and perfectibility, individual and general."²⁶ But however well the philosopher and Barlow agreed in principle²⁷ and respected one another, their temperaments had little in common. On the other hand, it is not hard to imagine that Barlow's buoyant nature easily took fire from Holcroft's. The acquaintanceship between the Barlows and Mary Wollstonecraft grew into considerable intimacy. Before she went to Paris in 1792, Barlow assisted in arrangements for her lodging there.²⁸ In the latter part of the year she came to Barlow for advice concerning her brother Charles's emigration as a farmer to America. Several extant letters from Mary Wollstonecraft to Mrs. Barlow attest the closeness of their friendship.

26 C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin, His Friends and Contemporaries*. (London, 1876), I, 71.

27 It may be noted here that in an essay supplementary to *The Vision of Columbus* entitled "A Dissertation on the Genius and Institutions of Manco Capac," Barlow had illustrated the influence of political systems upon the human mind by the differences in national character between the peoples of Mexico and Peru. This theme was to receive its elaboration in *Political Justice*.

28 See an unpublished letter from Barlow to Mrs. Barlow, dated at Paris June 10, 1792, in the "Barlow Papers."

¶But, after all, the most important of all the acquaintanceships developed at this time was that with Paine, whose influence upon his mind soon became more powerful than that of all others.¶ They were both in London from the summer of 1791 to the autumn of 1792 and were undoubtedly often drawn together by common friends and common interests. Rickman, at whose house Paine was living quietly during the summer of 1791 while places of assembly were being closed to him, mentions Barlow among Paine's visitors at the time along with Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Christie, Priestley, and Horne Tooke.²⁹ One of Paine's friends whom he came to know very well was Dr. John Warner, who in 1790 had gone to Paris as chaplain to the English ambassador, Earl Gower, and had there been indoctrinated with revolutionary ideas.³⁰

In February, 1792, Barlow came forward with a mediocre satire in verse, *The Conspiracy of Kings*, and the most exhaustive and most distinguished of his prose writings, *Advice to the Privileged Orders in the Several States of Europe, resulting from the Necessity and Propriety of a General Revolution in the Principle of Government*. In both he gives full rein to his pugnacious instincts, but, in the latter especially, there is a great deal more than sound and fury. *The Conspiracy of Kings* is a political satire in the tradition of Juvenal, written as an

29 See Thomas Clio Rickman, *Life of Thomas Paine* (London, 1819), pp. 100-102.

30 Three very affectionate unpublished letters from Warner to Barlow have been preserved in the Pequot Library. In one, dated at Stourhead Dec. 6, 1791, he writes of entertaining Madame de Sillery, pioneer of modern French education and revolutionary mentor of the young Louis Philippe.

attack upon the sovereigns of Europe who had just formed a coalition against republican France. "The poem aims," writes Tyler,³¹ "to be very exasperating, even appalling; somehow succeeds in being only abusive; emits mere howls of metrical vituperation." But it is the passion of a patriot of mankind, not of a demagogue. It opens with an address to the great of the earth, who owe their stations to the monumental rascality and conscienceless ambition of their sires or to their own success in deluding the people and keeping them in ignorance. Such epithets as "knaves whom meanness styles the great," "crested reptiles," "those prolific monsters, courts and kings," and "sceptered horde" are scattered at random through his denunciation. He has boundless confidence that the French Revolution will rise to the greatness of its task and in the name of human nature lead the world to a new outpost of truth. He sees the native dignity of man prostituted to the show of power, and benevolence and independence of spirit made impossible by wars and the slavish adulation paid to the supposedly great.³²

31 Moses Coit Tyler, *Three Men of Letters* (New York, 1895), p. 171.

32 See *The Political Writings of Joel Barlow* (1796), pp. 242, 248-249. This volume contains all the productions originally published in 1792 and the *Letter Addressed to the People of Piedmont*. The collection was published in New York by John Fellows, who had in 1795 published separately the *Advice, the Conspiracy of Kings*, and the *Letter to the National Convention*. An avowed deist, Fellows had found sympathy for his ideas in a correspondence with Barlow and became intimate with Paine upon his return to America. *The Conspiracy of Kings* was reprinted in 1932 as an appendix to V. C. Miller's *Joel Barlow, Revolutionist, London, 1791-92*.

But Barlow directs the bitterest part of his denunciation in *The Conspiracy of Kings* against the enemies of the French Revolution in England. He denounces Pitt for abandoning his earlier liberalism. The lion's share of his political railing, however, goes to Burke, whom he pictures as a sort of half-angel and half-devil, so inextricably are the elements of good and evil mixed in him:³³

Oh Burke, degenerate slave! with grief and shame
 The Muse indignant must repeat thy name.
 Strange man, declare—since at creation's birth,
 From crumbling chaos sprang this heaven and earth . . .
 Declare from all these fragments whence you stole
 That genius wild, that monstrous mass of soul;
 Where spreads the widest waste of all extremes,
 Full darkness frowns and heaven's own splendor beams;
 Truth, error, falsehood, rhetoric's raging tide,
 And pomp and meanness, prejudice and pride.³³

In his "Note on Mr. Burke," an appendix to the poem, he lays upon the statesman the responsibility for the war of the powers against France, which he considers the insidious outgrowth of the *Reflections*:

where in his quality as the political schoolmaster of his age . . . the professed enemy of tyrants, the friend of the people, . . . he tells them that this revolution is an abominable usurpation of a gang of beggarly tyrants; that its principle is atheism and anarchy; that its instruments are murders, rapes, and plunders; that its object is to hunt down religion, overturn society, and deluge the world in blood. Then in the whining cant of state piety and in the cowardly insolence of personal safety, he calls upon the principal sovereigns of Europe . . . to make

³³ *The Political Writings of Joel Barlow*, pp. 245-246.

war with the principles which he himself had long labored to support and to blast the fairest hopes of public happiness that the world had ever seen . . . What is the language proper to be used in describing the character of a man, who in his situation, at his time of life, and for a pension of only fifteen hundred pounds a year, could sit down deliberately in his closet and call upon the powers of earth and hell to inflict such a weight of misery upon the human race?³⁴

Paine had chastised the author of the *Reflections* with whips; Barlow chastises him with scorpions.¹ There is more rage than depth of argument in his onslaught, but it well represents the exasperated temper of the radicals at the beginning of 1792 in England. One of his English correspondents wrote him concerning the poem: "I think I shall see you in the Tower before long. If so, take care to procure good apartments."³⁵

Advice to the Privileged Orders is the type of writing of which Barlow shows undoubted mastery—argumentative prose and historical discussion.¹ It shows best his extraordinary capacity for public business and his intellectual versatility, which led Henry Adams to call him a "universal genius." It is the most carefully composed and ablest of his writings in prose. Into it went at the same time all the pent-up feelings of a volcanic republican. Of its inception he wrote to his brother-in-law, Abraham Baldwin, on October 17, 1791:

I am meditating an attack which will be announced in a manifesto something like this, *The Renovation of Society, or an Essay on the Propriety of a revolution in the*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 255, 257.

³⁵ Unpublished letter of March 25, 1792, from J. T. Clarke to Joel Barlow, in the Pequot Library.

governments of Europe. I have such a flood of indignation and such a store of argument accumulated [sic] in my guts on this subject that I can hold it no longer; and I think the nurslings of abuses are cut more to the quick than they have yet been by all the diffusions to which the French revolution has given occasion.³⁶

The first four chapters were published by the liberal bookseller Joseph Johnson as Part I in February, 1792. Part II was written in late 1792, but its publication was forbidden by the English government. It was published in Paris by the English press in September, 1793, and in London later the same year under the title, *Revenue and Public Expenditure*. In 1795 it was again "Printed and Sold by Daniel Isaac Eaton, Printer and Bookseller to the Supreme Majesty of the People," who was later imprisoned by the government.

He begins by emphasizing in the preface the fact that the French Revolution is the outcome of argument among the people, not of the use of the sword. He argues that unequal laws have resulted in the rise of a tyrannical class, which, ignoring the virtual equality in power and capacity of men in the same community, have made politics "the inexplicable science." He outlines the "shifts of sophistry" by which the rights of kings have been supported:

In one age it is the *right of conquest*, in another the *divine right*, then it comes to be a *compact between king and people*, and last of all it is said to be founded upon general convenience, the *good of the whole community*.

He makes, with Paine, the naïve assumption of the fundamental simplicity of good government:

³⁶ Unpublished letter in the "Barlow Papers."

Whether a change of government shall take place and extend through Europe . . . is to be decided by men who reason better without books than we do with all the books in the world.³⁷

¶ He proceeds to deal with certain relics of the feudal system, like primogeniture and the standing army, which had long outlasted their original purpose of national preservation. ¶ The feudal system of government represses the habit of thinking, which inevitably leads to the conclusion that all men are equal in their rights. The universities support these outworn feudal institutions. Oxford ignores representative republics and teaches the politics of Aristotle. Finally, Barlow repudiates the personal claims of feudalism to perpetual allegiance and idleness. "For a man to be *born* to an allegiance to another man is to have an evil star indeed; it is to be born to unchangeable slavery." It is a ridiculous anomaly in modern life "that the offspring of a noble family can experience the . . . fatality of being told that to put his hand to the plow or his foot into a counting house, would disgrace an illustrious line of ancestors and wither a tree of genealogy which takes its roots in the groom of some fortunate robber who perhaps was an archer of Charlemagne." Erase these detestable vestiges of the feudal system from society and "honor will be restored to the heart of man instead of being suspended from his buttonhole."³⁸

¶ Next follows an impetuous attack upon the Christian church, defined by Barlow as meaning the Christian relig-

37 *The Political Writings of Joel Barlow*, pp. xi, xv.

38 *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33. As early as 1786 Barlow had protested against laws of feudal origin which had survived in the common laws of England and the United States. See Zunder, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-94.

ion "perverted and pressed into the service of government."³⁹ It is one of the most determined attacks upon institutional religion in England before the publication of Paine's *Age of Reason*. His political enemies unjustly charged him with religious apostasy, as Paine's enemies charged him with atheism. But he was not consistent enough to follow Paine into complete deism. He did not become even during the Revolution an unbeliever in the Christian system.⁴⁰ But he heartily hated all the forms of its perversion in the hands of ecclesiastical hierarchies. The fact that religion deals with things invisible, he points out, makes it easy to pervert it. So tyranny in league with organized religion stimulates the power of mystery over the forces of reason, thus darkening the minds of men in order to impress them.

The chapter on the military system is in large part a repudiation of the so-called system of honor upon which it is built. Honor, though like religion an indispensable element in our lives, may be allowed to destroy the moral sentiments and debase the dignity of man. It has made killing men in itself an honorable employment. Why discriminate between the office of a hangman and that of a soldier? Why are both sides of every military contest equally the road to fame? The pursuit of honor in the profession of arms was made the fashion of ancient kings, who early found war necessary for their existence and in fact often exposed themselves in battle. "They said,

39 *The Political Writings of Joel Barlow*, p. 44.

40 See his *Letter to Henry Grégoire...in Reply to his Letter on the Columbiad* (1809), reprinted in Todd, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-233. See also in the Pequot Library Barlow's letter of Oct. 24, 1809, to Jonathan Law, in which he defends himself from attacks upon his religion by Timothy Dwight and others.

'Let human slaughter be honorable,' and honorable it was."⁴¹ And thus was honor made a mere scutcheon. He proceeds with a ringing denunciation of war in general as a mere instrument of the aggrandizement of kings.

The discussion of the administration of justice is the most arresting and closely reasoned portion of the book. Here are his boldest arguments in favor of a general revolution. He starts with the Godwinian assumption of the pervasive influence of government upon morals and happiness, charging that many vices usually attributed to the "permanent nature of man" really result from the "mutable energies of state." And upon this assumption he bases, like Godwin, his belief in perfectibility. Given a good government which does not pervert the moral propensities with which nature has endowed us, "where shall we limit the progress of human wisdom and the force of its institutions in ameliorating, not only the social conditions, but the controlling principles of man"?⁴² Among the "most degrading retreats of prostituted logic" to which the system of orders and privileges has been driven to justify its existence, are the doctrines that private vices are public benefits and that some are born to command and others to be commanded. With Paine, he accepts Rousseau's doctrine of natural rights, and repudiates Burke's interpretation of the social contract as involving a compact between king and people.⁴³ In outlining the duties of society in relation to the rights of the individual, he pushes his individualist philosophy to an extreme that naturally disturbed the keepers of the common weal. He

⁴¹ *The Political Writings of Joel Barlow*, p. 53.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴³ See *ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

insists that society is bound to furnish the means of subsistence to him who is born without them, since "she has usurped his birthright and this is restoring it to him in another form."⁴⁴ He justifies a reprisal upon society by the individual on the ground that he is held in indigence by society itself and is thus driven to take another's goods to replace his own. Men organize themselves in society to diminish their physical evils; out of this connection arise moral evils. Solution: instead of trying to remove the moral evil outright by vindictive justice, remove the physical evil by distributive justice, and the moral evil will take care of itself. But the administration of distributive justice in England is handicapped by the venal class of lawyers, who are simply parasites upon the body politic and whose power is built upon the ignorance of the laws of the land fostered among the people by the government's deliberate failure to provide information:

The laws of the land . . . are studied not to be understood but to be disputed. The man whose property is dependent upon a suit at law . . . mounts on the back of a lawyer, like one of Mr. Burke's heroes of chivalry between the wings of a griffin, and trusts the pilotage of a man who is superior to himself only in the confidence which results from his having nothing at stake.⁴⁵

But, as Miller points out, though Barlow condemns extreme economic inequality, he is no leveller.

Lastly, in the fifth chapter, originally published as Part II, Barlow treats of revenue and expenditure with special attention to their connection with war. This is the most

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

intemperate portion of the book. He starts with the assumptions that revenue is always made the end rather than the means of government and that the interests of the governed and those of the government are necessarily opposite. Having paid a tribute to Paine, who had dealt with these subjects in the second part of *The Rights of Man*, as "a luminary of the age and one of the greatest benefactors of mankind,"⁴⁶ he proceeds in the spirit of his master to explain how the origin of the revenue system of Europe is the feudal engagement of a vassal to serve a certain number of days in the wars of his lord at his own expense and the sacrifice of his own private judgment about the object of his service. He concentrates his fire upon two specific revenue policies which are accepted as fundamental in modern public finance: indirect taxation and the funding of the public debts. He attacks the former on account of its disguised character, by which the government hoodwinks the people into supporting it financially. The latter he condemns because it shifts the burdens to generations not responsible for the expenditure,⁴⁷ and he thinks that the necessity of resorting to it results from the failure of modern nations to stir their citizens sufficiently to support wars for profits among merchants, ministers, and generals, instead of for

46 *Ibid.*, p. 109. I have not here dealt fully with the sources of the *Advice* since this task has been competently performed by Miller. He has traced various ideas in the book to Montesquieu, Rousseau, Lafayette, Volney, Locke, Price, Paine, and Adam Smith.

47 Barlow's opposition to the funding system was in consonance with the denial of the radicals that one generation could bind another politically by "the indissoluble compact of a dead parchment." He had expressed the same economic opinion three years before. See the unpublished letter of Sept. 6, 1789, in the Pequot Library.

honor among kings as formerly. The most effective means of raising an oppressive revenue is an unrepresentative parliament, which its advocates now support openly and shamelessly by arguing that the people can never be capable of knowing what is for their good, of making their own laws, or even of understanding them.

Mr. Burke, in a frenzy of passion, has drawn away the veil; and aristocracy, like a decayed prostitute whom painting and patching will no longer embellish, throws off her covering to get a livelihood by displaying her ugliness.⁴⁸

Miller seems to have been the first writer on Barlow to note that the last three of the eight divisions of the *Advice* listed in the introduction were never published and most probably never written. They were "6. The Means of Subsistence. 7. Literature, Science, and Arts. 8. War and Peace." I have discovered among the "Barlow Papers" what is apparently a portion of the projected but unpublished sixth chapter. It is a manuscript of a single page entitled "The Means of Subsistence" but is marked "Chapter VII." Though, as we have seen above, he has insisted in the *Advice* upon the primacy of natural rights even to the point of urging that society is obligated to furnish means of subsistence to him who is born without them, he here shows little patience for Rousseauistic vaporings about the state of nature. The passage is connected in theme with Chapter III, "The Administration of Justice," the first sentence appearing to require a context, which has probably been lost.

⁴⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 116.

The fact is that there is no such state [of nature] antecedent to the social, that can be supposed to have existed, unless it be a perfect solitude of one person only; and if there could, it must have been an unnatural state. The only state of nature is a state of society; and the more numerous the members, the more various their pursuits, the more populous their territory, the higher the improvements in every kind of industry and art, provided an universal cultivation of the moral faculties should keep pace with physical exertion, the more perfect would be the condition of that society considered as a state of nature. This, therefore, is my understanding of the term; a perfect state of society is a perfect state of nature.

Thus, following the majority of the philosophers of the Enlightenment, Barlow repudiates Rousseau's doctrine of the perfection of primitive life as an absurdity in radical speculation. Barlow's use of the word "nature" here in the sense of the final consummating stage of a development is rare in the late eighteenth century.⁴⁹

Between April and July of 1792, Barlow was in France on a mission of undetermined nature to Lafayette, then in charge of one of the armies on the frontier. He reached Aix la Chapelle just as the news of the declaration of war against Austria was received and wrote his wife of the enthusiasm with which the French residents of the city heard of it.⁵⁰ Again in Paris, he writes to her with

49 I am indebted for this observation to Professor R. D. Havens, of the Johns Hopkins University, who has pointed out to me that this is No. 29 of the various meanings of "nature" given in the appendix of A. O. Lovejoy and George Boas's *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (Baltimore, 1935).

50 See an unpublished letter of April 25, 1792, in the "Barlow Papers."

equanimity just after the dismissal of the Girondist ministers and in the midst of the universally fierce denunciation of the king which followed this action.⁵¹ He witnessed the riots at the Tuilleries on June 20 and observed concerning them :

This visit to the King by armed citizens was undoubtedly contrary to law but the existence of a king is contrary to another law of a higher original . . . The constitution of nature is older than that made by the last assembly,—and the people feel this truth; they must express it in their own way, and they always will express it by irregular movements till they shall have wit enough to settle the matter according to the laws of nature, which admit of no king.⁵²

It is apparent that Barlow at the time did not discriminate closely between an insurrectionary mob and constituted democratic authority and that he was at heart a well-wisher of these potential demolishers of the throne.

After his return to London came the August massacres in Paris, and, seeing plainly a great change impending in France, he prepared his *Letter to the National Convention of France, on the Defects in the Constitution of 1791, and the Extent of the amendments which ought to be applied*. Dated September 16, 1792, within a week of the proclamation of the Republic, it was presented to the Convention by Paine during the same month and highly praised

51 See an unpublished letter of June 18, 1792, in the "Barlow Papers."

52 Letter of June 25, 1792, to Mrs. Barlow in the "Barlow Papers." The first sentence only was quoted by Todd, but incorrectly (*op. cit.*, p. 96).

by him as a member. The Convention declared Barlow a French citizen in recognition of his services to the Republic through this paper.⁵³ About the same time like honors were bestowed upon six others of the British radical leaders. Barlow's friend, John Warner, in a letter from Paris of October 18, announced the honor to Barlow and hailed the new republic:

A thousand thanks to you, my dear jewel of a Joel, for the 'feast of Reason and the flow of Soul' with which you have this day regaled me in your kind letter and that to the N[ational] C[onvention]. It will, I flatter myself, do great credit to the writer and great good to the glorious cause, of which he is so able a support . . . How your hearts must have exulted as mine has at the glorious successes of the infant republic, but of Herculean mold, and how must you have laughed, as I have, at the Feast of Lies of the discomfitures of its host with which our courtiers have been regaling themselves. I should think it has been attended to some of them with an Indigestion . . . Leave the scene! No, you must come here and be made a Conventionalist, et Citizen. I think you will whether you come or not; for in the *Patriote* of the 25th ult. appeared the following list of 7 Anglais à qui la C[onvention] N[ationale] pourvoit le titre de Citoyen François—Thomas Cooper, John Horne Tooke, John Oswald, George Rous, Joel Barlow, Thomas Christie, and whose should the last name be but that of your humble servant, who was not a little pleased to see himself, with his little pretensions,

53 A letter from Hérault, the president of the National Convention, dated Nov. 14, 1792, advises Barlow that honorable mention has been made of his *Letter* in the minutes and that its translation has been ordered. This letter and the *procès-verbal* of the Convention, dated Feb. 16, 1793, have been preserved in the Pequot Library.

in such good company . . . Pray send your letter to the N.C. to our Friend Hayley . . . And pray send me a *Conspiracy of Kings* . . . I hope you often see our Friend Horne Tooke. Pray tell me how he does. And that you go to the Constitutional Society.⁵⁴

The *Letter to the National Convention* is unequivocally revolutionary. The pulling up of the rooted order of things no longer has any terrors for him. It is written with an abandon which shows that the wine of revolution has gone to his head.¹ The greatest vice in the French constitution is the maintenance of the King, which even under a limited monarchy has been almost fatal to the cause of liberty. "The experiment . . . has taught a new doctrine, which no experience can shake and which reason must confirm, that *kings can do no good*."⁵⁵ In his *Advice to the Privileged Orders*, Barlow had condemned monarchy in principle but condoned its practice in France as a sort of vestige of the old system necessary to retain for a time only. Here there is not a shred of argument left for it. Assuming that the wise and good should make the laws, it does not follow that, if kings and nobles were always wise and good, they should be the hereditary legislators. The fitness of men for making laws is not

⁵⁴ Todd (*op. cit.*, p. 96) confuses the author of this letter with "Dr. Joseph Warner, the English surgeon and philosopher," who was not a revolutionist and, so far as I have been able to determine, not an acquaintance of Barlow. Moncure D. Conway (*Life of Thomas Paine*, I, 350) was led into the same error. Todd published portions of this quotation, though inaccurately. The original of the letter is now preserved in the Musée de la Coopération Franco-Américaine de Blérancourt. For the transcription of this letter and other material there, I am indebted to Monsieur André Girodier, curator of the museum.

⁵⁵ *The Political Writings of Joel Barlow*, p. 164.

dependent upon moral character, but upon whether the law made expresses the will of the people. The national church, being an hierarchy, is but a support of monarchy. Bury them together; religion will not suffer thereby. He ridicules the sacredness attributed to constitutions, since it involves the supposition that our predecessors have had "a degree of discernment to which our own bears no comparison and . . . have known our condition by prophecy better than we know it by experience." As a model of vibrant English and as a declaration of pure republican principle the *Letter to the National Convention* takes no mean rank among the state papers of the period.

The *Letter* was soon being circulated with the *Advice* wherever there was the least susceptibility to republican propaganda. In a letter to the Society of Constitutional Whigs, Independents, and Friends of the People, presenting copies of the *Letter* and the *Advice*, he confidently declared:

The present disposition in Europe toward a general revolution in the principle of government is founded in a current of opinion too powerful to be resisted and too sacred to be treated with neglect.⁵⁶

¹He was naturally soon receiving his full share of the suspicion then being directed against the radicals, and in November the *Advice* was suppressed.'

56 Unpublished letter of Oct. 6, 1792, in the Pequot Library. This society was organized in April, 1792, by some of the more advanced Whigs and a few of the milder radicals. It was more conservative than the Constitutional and Correspondence Societies and eschewed the political fermentation to which the French Revolution had given rise. Barlow undoubtedly considered their ideas about reform too mild.

In November, 1792, Barlow suddenly left England for France, to escape arrest, it was said, during the movement against the radicals that culminated in Paine's trial, though it appears that no legal action had yet been instituted against him.⁵⁷ He had been urged, however, by some of his friends to present himself for a seat in the Convention. Paine had in September been elected to the Convention from Calais, and it is certain that Barlow entertained an ambition to join his friend in the work of founding the new republic.

Just before leaving England he was deputed with John Frost by the London Constitutional Society to present an address to the French Convention. His companion was an attorney and ally of Horne Tooke and had assisted Paine in his flight in September. At Paris Barlow and Frost lodged at White's Hotel with Paine. Here on November 18 the English residents in Paris held a celebration at which among other toasts the following was drunk: "The patriotic societies of Great Britain and Ireland, with those who have contributed to inform and enlighten the people—Priestley, Fox, Sheridan, Barlow, Mackintosh, Cooper, Tooke."⁵⁸ The address of the Con-

57 Miller doubts that Barlow left London because of fear of persecution, since both the second and third editions of the *Advice* and the *Letter to the National Convention* were all published by Johnson, "a rather timorous publisher," after the proclamation against seditious publications in May. There may be some reason for the doubt, but I should base it upon the deliberation of the government in Barlow's case rather than upon the timorousness of Johnson. No publisher in England during this period was a greater befriender of radicals with matter to print than Joseph Johnson. In fact, he was later sentenced to nine months' imprisonment for the publication of seditious matter.

58 Quoted by Miller (*op. cit.*, p. 39) from the *Annual Register* for 1792. He thinks that the well-known revolutionary parody of "God

stitutional Society, in which work Barlow probably had a hand himself, was as bold politically as it was effective rhetorically. It declares the French Revolution to be

the practical result of principles which philosophy had sought in the shade of speculation and which experience everywhere must confirm . . . In this career of improvement, your example will be soon followed; for nations, rising from their lethargy, will reclaim the rights of man with a voice which governments cannot resist.

Barlow and Frost were received at the bar of the Convention on November 28 with great acclaim. Barlow prefaced his reading of the address by an assurance that England would soon come to the aid of the Revolution. The president's answer was calculated even more to inflame conservative opinion against the radicals in England:

The shades of Pym, of Hampden and Sydney are hovering over your heads.; and the moment cannot be distant when the people of France will offer their congratulations to a National Convention in England.⁵⁸

"Save the King" in praise of the guillotine was probably a product of this occasion. Duyckinck, *Cyclopedia of American Literature* (New York, 1856, I, 393) wrote that it was said to have been "originally written for the amusement of some of his revolutionary friends at Hamburg" in celebration of the execution of Louis XVI. "There seems," writes Miller, "no ground for denying Barlow's authorship of the lines." But Barlow has left an outright denial of it. See the letter of Oct. 24, 1809, to Jonathon Law in the Pequot Library, quoted in A. R. Marble's *Heralds of American Literature* (Chicago, 1907), p. 173. Cf. also the unpublished letter of Oct. 1, 1810, from Fulton to Barlow in the "Barlow Papers."

59 The story of this whole transaction, with the text of the addresses was presented as evidence against Hardy at his trial for treason nearly two years later. See *The Trial of Thomas Hardy*, reported by Joseph Gurney, II, 49-62.

The deputies also informed the Convention that the Constitutional Society had sent a gift of one thousand shoes to "the soldiers of liberty." The address of the society was so disquieting that it was said "to have given birth to the state trials of 1794."⁶⁰ Burke read it and declared that "the question . . . is not whether we should make an address to the throne, but whether we should have a throne at all."

On December 4, 1792, Barlow joined a committee of the National Convention, to which his friend, Grégoire, Bishop of Blois, belonged, on a trip to Savoy to organize the province into a new department. While there he wrote during the same month his *Letter Addressed to the People of Piedmont on the advantages of the French Revolution and the necessity of adopting its principles in Italy*. It was written at the request of the Convention as a piece of propaganda and sown broadcast over the country in French and Italian. It was not published in England, however, until 1795. He calls the attention of the Piedmontese to the timeliness of revolt, since "all the crowned heads of Europe are now covered with thorns"; denounces the system of censorship set over them by their government; brands propaganda against the French in Piedmont as false; apologizes for the cruelty and bloodshed of the Revolution; and ends with an eloquent recital of the efforts of France against the combination of her tyrant enemies. The comparatively liberal *Monthly Review*⁶¹ denounced the *Letter* as based upon the groundless assumption that the whole business of monarchy is decep-

⁶⁰ *Public Characters*, 1805-1806, p. 163.

⁶¹ XVIII, 446-451 (Dec., 1795).

tion. While he was in Savoy he was nominated for deputy but was defeated, returning to Paris in early March.

Meanwhile the King had been executed and war had been declared against England. Soon the conflict between the Gironde and the Mountain began moving definitely toward the final overthrow of his friends in power on June 2. But Barlow had been wise enough not to become involved in any of the machinations of the Girondist regime. What might have happened, had he become a member of the Convention, we can only conjecture from the treatment of Paine at the hands of the Jacobins. At first Barlow planned to carry out his oft-expressed purpose of going home, but he was induced by the prospects of a business enterprise of undisclosed character to linger on, untroubled by the lowering of the political sky. On the eve of the Terror in 1793 he removed to Mendon, a suburb of Paris, with his wife, who had come over from London in the latter part of June. He had promised her that he would have nothing more to do with politics, and his ci-cumspection was soon justified.

Temporarily his rage for political writing seems to have been subdued almost completely. His literary activity during the remainder of 1793 appears to have been limited to the publication of Part II of the *Advice* in September and to the editing of the sixth edition of his friend Trumbull's *M'Fingall*, which he brought out in London with a preface. In it, after deplored the influence of *M'Fingall's* great prototype, *Hudibras*, toward the depreciation of republican institutions, he declares it the commendable object of Trumbull "to ridicule monarchy—to expose the absurd arguments and shallow subterfuges which are uni-

formly used, wherever it is attempted to be supported by reasoning." At the same time Barlow recognized what a recent writer⁶² has elaborated upon in an article on Trumbull—"the impartiality of the Author in aiming the shafts at whatever is censurable in both parties; the extravagant zeal of the Whigs, as well as that of the Tories is exposed without disguise to our disapprobation."⁶³

Meanwhile Barlow's works were going through much the same vicissitudes in England as Paine's, being eagerly sought by the populace and as industriously cried down by the government and its agents. The first part of the *Advice* was perhaps more extensively read than any other radical publication except Paine's *Rights of Man*, beside which it took its place in breaking up the molds of political opinion. In 1792 Part I was published in German and in 1794 Parts I and II were published in French. Fox praised it in Parliament. Jefferson congratulated him. But the British condemned the book and its author, seized his letters as those of a suspect, and put emissaries upon his trail in Paris. In January, 1793, a former comrade of Paine in a letter⁶⁴ to him alluded to Barlow's lack of respectability in England. Burke inveighed against him in the Commons. On January 9, Mrs. Barlow wrote to her husband from London:

Our newspapers mention that you are appointed member of the Convention from Savoy, but the French papers say nothing about it, so that we suppose it is not true.

⁶² Alexander Cowie, "John Trumbull as a Revolutionist," *American Literature*, III, 287-295 (Nov., 1931).

⁶³ Page ix.

⁶⁴ Moncure D. Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine* (New York, 1892), I, 379 n.

. . . You cannot think how much you are abused here. The *Oracle* of yesterday has promised his correspondents, that on Thursday he shall publish in this paper an interesting account of the life of Joel Barlow, Author of the *Advice to the Privileged Orders*. Mr. Burke often makes honorable mention of you in Parliament. Sometimes he calls you a prophet, the prophet Joel. I shall enclose you one of his sentences. You are very obnoxious here and it is thought you cannot return with safety. The Alien Bill would prevent you, if nothing more.— Mr. Burke said: "The members of the Constitutional Society held open correspondence with certain societies in France, for the express purpose of altering the constitution of this country. A citizen by the name of Joel Barlow, another by the name of John Adams, and citizen Frost were engaged in this correspondence and they had been deemed unanswerable." . . . I fear, my love, you did wrong in going to Paris with Mr. F---t; his character here is so bad it has injured yours, hitherto spotless.⁶⁵

By the middle of 1793 he had become an object of wholesale abuse in the press⁶⁶ of England, where by this time all carriers of "the French disease" were being subjected to the most merciless scrutiny. The shock of English opinion over the violence of the Convention is sympathetically reflected even by Mrs. Barlow in a letter to her husband while he was on the mission of the Convention in Savoy:

65 Letter in the Musée de Blérancourt. The larger part of the quotation has been published by Todd (*op. cit.*, p. 109). Zunder, apparently misled by the first sentence, has written that Barlow "was deputy for Savoy" but less accountably that he "was defeated for re-election." ("Notes on the Friendship of Joel Barlow and Tom Paine," *American Book Collector*, VI, 97, March, 1935).

66 For examples of this abuse, see Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-49.

I am distressed at the thoughts of a war between this country and France. The death of the unfortunate French king is the present pretext. Surely they could not have done so impolitic an action, setting aside the injustice of it, which I think unparalleled. Their friends condemn them equally as their enemies. The National Convention have most certainly greatly disgraced themselves and their country by showing such passion and violence in their debates and being directed solely by their passions . . . They have showed themselves too cruel and blood-thirsty for the legislators of any country, particularly of a free one.—Their friends are ashamed of them.⁶⁷

Barlow's records of the Terror are sparse. Of the execution of his friends, the Girondists, in October 1793, we hear nothing. The fewness of his letters during this period is accounted for not only by the fact that his wife, to whom he was a most faithful correspondent, was with him practically all the time, but also by the fact that he wished to avoid the appearance of offense toward the Jacobins.

But while he retired from controversy as the Reign of Terror in France and the state trials of 1794 in England approached, his revolutionary associations continued unabated. During the summer and autumn of 1793 while Paine with a half dozen of his disciples was in idyllic retirement in the old mansion of Madame de Pompadour, Barlow often joined Mary Wollstonecraft, Nicholas Bonneville, Gilbert Imlay, Brissot, and the Rolands about

⁶⁷ Unpublished portion of a letter of Feb. 1, 1793 in the Musée de Blérancourt.

their friendly hearth.⁶⁸ His friendship for Paine was well demonstrated during the latter's imprisonment. On his way to the Luxembourg after arrest at three o'clock on New Year's morning, 1794, Paine contrived to call on Barlow and entrusted to him the manuscript of *The Age of Reason*.⁶⁹ Barlow's house was searched by the commissaries for papers belonging to Paine.⁷⁰ On January 27, he joined seventeen other prominent Americans in Paris in a fruitless petition to the Committee of Public Safety for Paine's release from prison.⁷¹

In the trials for treason of members of the London Corresponding Society and of the London Constitutional Society in 1794, Barlow's name was linked by the enemies of reform with Paine's.⁷² The attorney-general in his opening speech at Thomas Hardy's trial represented Paine and Barlow as the arch-conspirators in the attempt to transplant French principles into England through the Constitutional Society. The most inflammatory and downright passages against monarchy in the *Advice* and the *Letter to the National Convention* were read into the record and the charge made that those writings were

68 See Moncure D. Conway, *op. cit.*, II, 64-68. Conway is certain that the graphic introductory biography of a pamphlet of Paine's pleading for underpaid excisemen, which was written in 1772 but not published until 1793 in London, is the work of Barlow. See *ibid.*, I, 27 n. It was probably written during this summer.

69 Paine tells the story in the preface to *The Age of Reason*, Part II. See Paine's *Theological Works* (Boston, 1856), p. 66.

70 See Moncure D. Conway, *op. cit.*, II, 106. The original of the report of the commissaries is in the Musée de Blérancourt.

71 For the text of this petition, see *ibid.*, II, 107-109. The original is in the Musée de Blérancourt.

as subversive of the government as Paine's.⁷² In his summing up, Chief Justice Eyre took occasion to censure the accused for unqualifiedly approving "the works of two celebrated writers, Thomas Paine and Joel Barlow," who sowed "prejudices against the Monarchy" and dared "to strike at the Orders of this Country to which the public had a devoted attachment."⁷³

Commercial projects, meanwhile, took him to Antwerp, Amsterdam, Hamburg, and Altoona. From the last-named city he wrote on August 12, 1794, to his wife at Amsterdam, whither presumably she had accompanied him, that he had read with satisfaction in the newspapers of the decline of the popularity of Robespierre. From this it appears that he had left Paris some weeks at least before the fall of the Jacobin leader on July 28. Another letter⁷⁴ of August 22 from the same city gives no sign the momentous news had yet reached him. In the midst of the Thermidorian Reaction he was far from the theater of violent events. On November 6, he writes to his friend Oliver Wolcott from Hamburg in such a way as to show that his republican faith has not been shaken by the enormities of the Terror:

The French Revolution will be such as to offer us much in our turn . . . I know that you and some of my other friends . . . consider my head as turned with these ideas. Perhaps it is, and perhaps it will be set right,

⁷² See *The Trial of Thomas Hardy*, I, 117-125; II, 35-42, 44-46; IV, 211-214. See also Coleridge's *Watchman* (London, 1798), pp. 20, 222.

⁷³ *The Trial of Thomas Hardy*, IV, 423, 424.

⁷⁴ Both these unpublished letters are in the "Barlow Papers."

when I come among you; but had you seen and felt what I have, I am confident you would have been of my opinion.⁷⁵

The remainder of the letter concerns his contemplated *History of the French Revolution*, which Wolcott and others had urged him to write. Concluding that it would "scarcely stand a chance of being treated impartially by its friends or enemies," he had decided that, though he might not be called "an indifferent spectator," he might be able to "trace the causes of things with more coolness than some others who have attempted or will attempt it."

For some time afterward, when Barlow's energies were not absorbed in business, he turned his mind to his plans for the *History*. In fact, one of the reasons why he did not return to America earlier was this literary undertaking. He wrote Wolcott on April 27, 1796:

Upon arriving at Paris last summer [1795] I found that the work which I contemplated on the history of the French Revolution would detain me there until it would be too late to make the voyage that season.⁷⁶

During the last months of the Convention he was presumably at work in collecting materials. But the project was interrupted by the prolonged and arduous mission to Algiers which in late 1795 he was persuaded to undertake for the liberation of American sailors held in slavery. In a letter to Mrs. Barlow from Marseilles en route to

⁷⁵ *Memoirs of the Administrations of George Washington and John Adams*, edited from the papers of Oliver Wolcott, by George Gibbs (New York, 1846), p. 160.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

Africa, he asks her to buy for him "the history of the Revolution of the tenth of August" and the posthumous writings of Madame Roland. "These works," he remarks, "will be necessary for the history of the Revolution."⁷⁷ According to Todd, he made an accumulation of notes, but the only portion of his extant papers indubitably intended for the book is a very incomplete outline in twelve chapters of the progress of the Revolution from the meeting of the States-General to the Peace of Campo Formio. It was evidently written in late 1797 and is preserved in the Pequot Library.

There were perhaps several reasons why the history of the Revolution never materialized. In the first place, it appears that his commercial speculations began yielding him handsome returns as the Directory gradually brought settled government back to France. This would not dispose him to run any useless political risks. Then, with the election of his friend Jefferson to the presidency, the old dream of the glory of America returned upon him and he began to devote much of his time to the expansion of *The Vision of Columbus*.

Much of his time, too, was taken up by his activity in behalf of the various enterprises of the American artist and inventor Robert Fulton, whom he had come to know in 1797 and who resided with him for the next seven years. Barlow was Fulton's unwearied patron through all the experiments in France and England with submarine explosives and steam navigation. In Fulton's first successful experiment with steamboat navigation on the Seine, August 9, 1803, he used a boiler patented by Barlow. This interest was reciprocated by Fulton, who

⁷⁷ Unpublished letter of Jan. 13, 1796 in the "Barlow Papers."

shared Barlow's opinions about the privileged classes and democratic reforms.⁷⁸ In fact, Fulton had already in England been led into sympathy for reform through his association with the liberal statesman Earl Stanhope, who in his experiments with steam and canal locks was largely instrumental in Fulton's turning from painting to engineering. In particular Fulton hoped to put an end with his submarine invention to all offensive naval warfare, and, with little prophetic insight apparently, to establish the freedom of the seas.

He was the inspirer of Barlow's unpublished poetical fragment of several hundred lines entitled "The Canal," which has as a descriptive title "A Poem on the application of Physical Science to Political Economy in four Books."⁷⁹ In the opening lines addressed to Fulton, he exclaims :

'Tis thine at last
To teach from theory, from practice show
The Powers of State, that '*tis no harm to know*
And prove how Science, with these powers combined,
May raise, improve, and harmonize mankind.

78 See Fulton's unpublished "Projected Letter to Pitt" in the Pequot Library; J. F. Reigart, *Life of Robert Fulton* (Philadelphia, 1856), pp. 89-92; R. H. Thurston, *Robert Fulton* (New York, 1891), pp. 56-59. It appears from an unpublished letter of March, 1805, from Barlow to William Lee that Fulton had been attacked in France along with Barlow by American correspondents of Federalist sympathies. The letter is in the Pequot Library.

79 There are two copies of "The Canal" in Barlow's hand preserved in the Pequot Library. On the first page of one of them appears the following note: "Only half the first book is yet written. 1 January 1802. Should I not live to finish the poem, I desire that this may be published as a fragment."

To lead up to the description of a pestilence caused by drought, which in the unwritten sequel he was apparently to show preventable by canal engineering, he turns into verse the astrological lore of the zodiac. He then characteristically traces the enslavement of the human mind from which the Enlightenment was to rescue it, to the mystic scheming of kings and priests; for from the contemplation of the zodiac

sprang the love of emblems, whence began
False science, priest-craft, all the mystic plan
That blind, that brutalize, that rob the race,
Enslave their bodies and their souls debase.

While Barlow did little, in spite of all his efforts to make science "a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man," he did envision clearly its liberating influence upon the corporate life.⁸⁰ Barlow's hopes for completing "The Canal" seem to have died hard. On March 30, 1806, he wrote from Washington to Fulton, still in Europe:

⁸⁰ On the tenth page of Barlow's manuscript there is a passage of six lines which prophesies the electric telegraph:

"Ah speed thy labors! Sage of unknown name,
Rise into light and seize thy promised fame:
For the chemic powers their bounds expand;
The imprisoned lightening waits thy guiding hand;
Unnumbered messengers in viewless flight
Shall bear thy mandate with the speed of light."

Lemuel C. Olmstead has appended the following comment to his copy of this extract in the Pequot Library: "I repeated the above to Morse, whose first thoughts were in 1834 and who said with enthusiasm and with energy—'It could not be more definite or graphic...if it had been written today.'"

I was contemplating the pleasure in getting forward and finishing the fine scientific poem of the Canal, of which you were to write the geological and I the historical and mythological notes, of which you were to furnish the philosophy and I the poetry, you the ideas and I the versification. "Is the mighty fabric vanished?" It seems forever gone.⁸¹

There is nothing here for the epic muse to mourn the loss of; but the fragment is interesting because it shows that Barlow recognized the vital connection between science and free government.

In spite of his career as a revolutionist, Barlow seems never to have been persecuted in France. He knew when to be circumspect. Perhaps his growing affluence⁸² had something to do with the moderating of his revolutionary activities. But in America and England the hunt for radicals was still on. His old friend and tutor President Dwight of Yale, who had been scandalized by his radical-

81 Unpublished letter in the "Barlow Papers."

82 In fact, his later affluence has, it appears, misled some of the students of his life to attribute to him a motive of personal ambition at least as strong as that of a belief in democracy even in the days of his greatest revolutionary fervor. "Without questioning his sincerity," writes Miller, "it can be said that he became a propagandist in order to advance his own interests" (*op. cit.*, p. 4). That his material interests grew is true, but this was due more to business acumen than to mere political opportunism. Certainly his interests in England were not advanced by the ideas he espoused. His fortune was originally based on French government securities which proved very profitable after the accession of Napoleon, upon whom Barlow certainly wasted no admiration. He later invested heavily in American securities. There is in the "Barlow Papers" an unpublished memorandum of stocks and lands belonging to him in the United States, dated Oct. 26, 1812, two months before his death. It lists \$115,540 in bank and corporation stock, and land claims approximately estimated at \$175,000.

ism, was asked by the General Association of Congregational Ministers of Connecticut to prepare a book to replace Barlow's revision of Watt's *Psalms*. "The chief reason for the change was . . . that Barlow . . . had become tinctured with the prevailing French infidel philosophy."⁸³ Noah Webster, who was a consistent critic of France, was much disturbed by the defection of his classmate, Though in the trouble between the Directory and the American government in 1798, he was instrumental in leading the Directory to recede from the position which the United States had regarded as a sufficient cause for war, his motives were maligned by his political enemies in America among the more unscrupulous Federalists.⁸⁴ Even President Adams, in a letter of February 19, 1799, to Washington full of partisan rancor, speaks of his "many unequivocal symptoms of blackness of heart," and his "babyish and womanly blubbering for peace," and declares that "Tom Paine himself is not a more worthless fellow."⁸⁵ In the Adams-Jefferson campaign he was a victim of partisan hatred and was actually accused of conniving with Talleyrand in an effort to dictate the political policy of the United States.⁸⁶ Two

83 A. C. Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 419. In 1785, at the request of the same body Barlow had undertaken a revision of Watts's book, mainly because some of the psalms had been considered prejudicial to American republican institutions and ill adapted to the new order! See T. A. Zunder, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-173, 178-185.

84 See Conway, *op. cit.*, II, 298, and Todd, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-160. Conway thinks that there is little doubt that the famous letter to Washington urging peace, Oct. 2, 1798, was written after consultation with Paine (*op. cit.*, II, 284 n.).

85 *Works of John Adams*, ed. C. F. Adams (Boston, 1850-56), VIII, 625.

86 See Todd, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-174.

open letters⁸⁷ to his fellow citizens of the United States have been credited with having much to do towards the Republican triumph of 1800. Meanwhile in *The Loves of the Triangles* the satirists of the *Anti-Jacobin* in England were picturing him, with a group of transported and outlawed radicals, as heading an invading army borne over to England in the "Floating Frame" of the Great Republic:

Ye soft airs breathe, ye gentle billows waft,
And fraught with Freedom, bear the expected Raft:
Perched on her back, behold the Patriot train,
Muir, Ashley, Barlow, Tone, O'Connor, Paine;
While Tandy's hand directs the blood-empurpled rein.⁸⁸

He tells how, when he went to England on a two weeks' business trip for Fulton in midsummer 1802, he tried to avoid the appearance of offense to the government by not looking up old friends:

I knew if I broke loose among my old democratic friends I could not avoid running the gauntlet of all their dinners, getting my name in the papers, and becoming an object of jealousy with the government . . . After all, I found in the coach last night a gentleman coming to Canterbury, a great Republican, who quickly found me

⁸⁷ *Letters from Paris to the Citizens of the United States of America* (London, 1800). These letters had been published separately in Paris, dated March 4, 1799, and Dec. 20, 1799. In them he returns to the attack upon the funding system, opposes the building up of an offensive navy, declares that "the perfectibility of human society is not a subject of idle speculation," and urges that "a republican direction be given to the elementary articles of public instruction" (pp. 3 and 31 of Letter II).

⁸⁸ *Anti-Jacobin*, No. XXVI, May 7, 1798.

out, and said he was led to the discovery by having been told the day before by Horne Tooke and Sir Francis Burdett that I was in London incog.⁸⁹

In England as late as 1805 he still shared a common infamy with Paine and other discredited radicals.⁹⁰

{At the end of the century he still held the principles of the Revolution in unqualified admiration. But he was more conscious than formerly of the too great demands made upon human nature by the revolutionary thinkers.} He had become doubtful of the early realization of pure democracy. Perhaps the most striking examples of how his asperity was subdued as the years passed are found in the changes which he made in his own copy of his *Political Writings* corrected for a new edition, a volume preserved in the Harvard College Library. He tones down his attack on Burke in the *Advice* and is more moderate in his use of superlatives in general. For the oft used word "tyrant" he substitutes "king," "prince," or "priest." In the *Letter to the People of Piedmont* he runs a line through the clause, "who were a disgrace to human nature," in a sentence attacking the men and women of the court of Versailles. And from the *Letter to the National Convention* he eliminates these intemperate sentences on his special antipathy, the funding system:

The man who is called a *politician* . . . in modern Europe exercises an office infinitely more destructive to society than that of a highwayman. The same may be

⁸⁹ Letter of July 2, 1802, from Barlow at Dover to Fulton, in the Pequot Library. Quoted in Todd, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-193.

⁹⁰ See for example the *Annual Review* (London, 1805), III, 88, an organ generally liberal in its political philosophy.

said in general of the *financier*; whose art and mystery in the funding system . . . consists in making calculations to enable governments to hire mankind to butcher each other by drawing bills on posterity for the payment.

As the hard impact of events in France somewhat tempered his political philosophy, he came to look upon America, then just entering the period of Jeffersonian ascendency, as the only asylum left in the world for liberal ideas." "Of the [French] republic," wrote one of his visitors in 1802, "he entertains the most profound contempt and, though he is extremely guarded in his remarks, what does fall from him is full of gall."⁹¹

A letter to his wife, written soon after Napoleon had made himself consul for life, shows, however, that he was not in complete despair even for France. Though he feels that Napoleon has "thrown back the progress of civilization & public happiness," he thinks that the ideas of false grandeur which he has revived cannot last long with moral and scientific progress.

The present state of society is not so much a contest between monarchical and republican principles as between false and true glory. A small degree of moral discernment will serve to decide this question. The example of America will be powerful & irresistible & England is coming on in a solid manner.⁸²

He had no doubt learned during his summer visit to England from his friend Tooke and his publisher Joseph Johnson of the improved state of the public mind. An interesting letter to his wife from Paris later reads:

91 Henry Redhead Yorke, *Letters from France in 1802* (London, 1804), II, 372.

92 Unpublished portion of a letter of Aug. 19, 1802, in the "Barlow Papers."

I sent Erving [American consul at London] one day to Johnson to tell him I was there but did not mean to see anybody but him, & asked him to meet us at the London Coffee house to dinner. He sent me word that he had that day Horne Tooke . . . & others to dine with him, that we must come, & he would answer for the silence of the company. I refused, & next day Johnson met us & we had a great deal of laugh. He is grown fat & careless & happy. He took me by the hand, shaking his sides, & the first word was "Well, you could not get me hanged; you tried all you could." He had enjoyed nine months' imprisonment, within the liberties of the King's Bench, living in a better house & better attended than at home, with his friends coming to see him & his business going on as well as ever . . . I was at Johnson's several times after I got a little tamed.⁸³

In France, meanwhile, wherever the friends of the Revolution gathered Barlow was, if possible, in the midst of them. He was a very frequent guest at the levees of Helen Maria Williams, English poetess and admirer of the Revolution whose dinner parties provided liberal-minded English literary and political leaders and their French friends many a rendezvous during the troubled years in Paris. A list of the guests at her salon between 1792 and 1802 includes a remarkably large proportion of the leaders of France during that period. Barlow's letters to his wife tell of twelve visits made to Miss Williams' house between May and September of 1802 alone.⁸⁴ At one time he writes of dining there with "the

83 Unpublished letter of July 12, 1802, in the "Barlow Papers."

84 See especially letters of May 11, July 9 and 20, 1802, in the "Barlow Papers" (portions published by Todd, *op. cit.*, pp. 184, 195, 197, 202). See also Thomas Poole's letter of July 20, 1802, to S. T. Coleridge in Mrs. Henry Sandford's *Thomas Poole and his Friends* (London, 1888), II, 85-86.

usual great circle of letter folks." At another time he writes: "I was at Helen's last night; I believe she has a party almost every night—30, or 40, or 50, chiefly English." He tells of meeting Fox, Lord Holland, and Carnot at other parties. The intimacy of his friendship with Miss Williams is attested by their own correspondence.⁹⁵ He also, as his letters of 1800 and 1802 abundantly show, was on very informal terms with Madame de Villette, protégée of Voltaire and widow of the revolutionary noble Charles de Villette. Meanwhile he cultivated friendships with the exiled Polish patriot Kosciusko and the French liberal savant Volney, and consulted with Sir Francis Burdett and "a whole host" of English republicans who had come over to Paris during the cessation of hostilities in 1802.⁹⁶

During the next two years *The Columbiad* absorbed all the literary effort for which he had time apart from that devoted to business matters that took him on frequent

95 In an unpublished letter of Nov. 16, 1801, to Miss Williams, which has been preserved in the Pequot Library, Barlow wrote: "A thousand thanks, dear Helen, for your divine *Ode to Peace*. I intend to come to kiss you for it as soon as my dear sick wife is able to go out." He includes two stanzas inspired by Miss Williams's poem and asks her "to tell Mr. [John Hurford] Stone if he thinks proper to print them at the end of the *Ode*. I shall be proud to see my name at the foot of a page that bears yours at the top." For the poem which Miss Williams dedicated to his memory, see Todd, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

96 For his relations with Kosciusko, Volney, and English republicans abroad at this time, see the unpublished letters for the following dates from Barlow to Mrs. Barlow in the "Barlow Papers": Aug. 1, 2, 23, 1800; May 18, June 10, July 10, 16, Aug. 5, 1802. In 1802 he published a translation of Volney's *Ruins*, "the best in English," Duyckinck (*op. cit.*, I, 393) has incorrectly given 1792 as the date of the translation. It was made at the request of Jefferson, who himself supplied the translation of the "Invocation".

short trips to England. Under the stimulus of Jefferson's repeated insistence, he set himself to the writing of a history of the United States from a Republican point of view, to offset "the libel on republicanism under the mask of a history of Genl. Washington"⁹⁷ which Marshall was then engaged in writing; but, like the *History of the French Revolution*, this work eventually was left hardly more than begun as a mere collection of notes. Finally in May 1805, he embarked⁹⁸ for America. Soon after his arrival he retired to a beautiful estate named Kalorama, near Washington, renewed his old friendship with Jefferson, maintained a salon for American liberals, and suffered at the hands of the Federalists, who continued freely to charge him with both rascality and infidelity. His retreat was termed the "Holland House of America." The recent statement of Grant C. Knight⁹⁹ that he was "radical when young but anti-Jeffersonian after years and wealth had brought responsibilities" is directly contrary to the facts and is typical of the misinformation which several writers on Barlow have shown. However, Barlow's intemperance of expression in his

97 Original letter of Jan. 19, 1804, from Jefferson to Barlow in the "Barlow Papers." See also a letter of Jan. 24, 1810, from Jefferson to Barlow, *Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. H. A. Washington (New York, 1853), V, 496.

98 He had intended to move his residence to Switzerland if John Adams had been re-elected. See an unpublished letter of Aug. 7, 1802, to Mrs. Barlow in the "Barlow Papers." He apparently left France in the good graces of the Napoleonic régime. In 1811 his last service to his country as minister plenipotentiary to Napoleon carried him back to Paris, where for more than a year he lived in his former residence and renewed his friendships with Volney and Helen Maria Williams.

99 *American Literature and Culture* (New York, 1932), p. 81.

letters to American friends as well as in his radical political papers might easily have lent color to some of the insinuations of his critics. A few months after the Terror, as we have seen, he had written to Oliver Wolcott: "The French Revolution will be such as to offer us much in our turn."¹⁰⁰ In 1795 he had written of "that famous mountebank called St. Paul" and had thus exulted over the stir caused by Paine's *The Age of Reason*: "I rejoice at the progress of Good Sense over the damnable imposture of Christian mummery. I had no doubt of the effect of Paine's *Age of Reason*. It must be cavilled at a while but it must prevail."¹⁰¹

In his pamphlet *The Second Warning* (1798) he had violently attacked Adams and monarchical tendencies in America. But his *Letters from Paris to Citizens of the United States* (1800) had been more restrained in tone. In general, however, there was considerable truth in his charge in 1809 that "the typographical cannibals of reputation" who "only do the work they are set about by their patrons and supporters, the monarchists of America," were deliberately trying to "destroy the effect of my republican writings."

(The last expression of Barlow's humanitarian instincts and of his penchant for huge projects was his plan for a great national university, set forth in his *Prospectus for a National Institution* (1806).¹ This institution was to be the choicest fruit of political justice. In 1800 Barlow had been in correspondence with Jefferson on education

¹⁰⁰ See n. 75. The original of this letter of Nov. 6, 1794, is in the "Barlow Papers."

¹⁰¹ MS letter to John Fellows, dated "Hamburg, May 1795," preserved in the Harvard College Library.

at the same time as was P. S. Dupont de Nemours, who at Jefferson's request published his scheme of national education under the title, *Sur l'Éducation Nationale dans les États Unis* (1800). Barlow's institution was to have as its two-fold object "the advancement of knowledge by associations of scientific men, and the dissemination of its rudiments by the instruction of youth."¹⁰² It was thus to combine the work of such learned corporations as the Royal Society and the Royal Academy or the National Institute of France with the more conventional type of higher educational training. Barlow drew up a bill for the incorporation of the institution and it passed to a second reading in the Senate, but was never reported out of committee. Though Jefferson was at the time interested in a national university, he preferred a state university national in influence, rather than a centralized federal institution at Washington.¹⁰³ However, by this time the old prejudices against Barlow planted by the Federalists had become so deeply rooted among the people as to make improbable his success in heading any great public enterprise. Even John Quincy Adams, for example, felt assured in 1807 that

¹⁰² *The Prospectus for a National Institution*, published as Appendix C of George Brown Goode's "The Origin of the National Scientific and Educational Institutions of the United States" in the Goode memorial volume of *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1897, Report of the U. S. National Museum*, Part II (Washington, 1901), p. 330. That the *Prospectus* was the fruit of an extended study is apparent from an unpublished letter of Dec. 28, 1798, to General Ira Allen of Vermont. See the extract from this letter preserved in a manuscript volume entitled "Miscellaneous Notes" in the "Barlow Papers."

¹⁰³ See H. B. Adams, *Jefferson and the University of Virginia* (Washington, 1888), pp. 48-52.

Tom and Joel now no more
Can overturn a nation,
And work by butchery and blood
A great regeneration.¹⁰⁴

But Barlow's educational ideas were, under happier auspices, eventually fruitful in more successful efforts. His friend and classmate, Josiah Meigs, joined with others in founding the Columbian Institute in 1819 and Columbian College in 1821, which started as attempts under private auspices to carry out essential features of Barlow's plan. "The Smithsonian Institution," wrote George Brown Goode ¹⁰⁵ in 1889, "with its dependencies, and affiliations, corresponds perhaps more closely . . . to Barlow's National Institution than any organization elsewhere in the world." Goode conjectures that Smithson knew Barlow in Paris and had been attracted by his *Prospectus*. No one has been able to explain why the British scientist left his money for the establishment of an institution of learning in the New World. Perhaps Barlow's confidence in the cultural future of the country had something to do with it.

In 1807 his great poetical *tour de force* was published. For the purposes of this study, it remains only to show what changes, during the twenty years between the publication of the first and that of the final form of this poem, the revolutionary temper and the radical philosophy wrought in it. Many of the added portions of *The Columbiad* have as their background the revolutionary associations of this period.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted by Duyckinck (*op. cit.*, I, 395) from a poem in the *Monthly Anthology* for 1807 entitled "On the Discoveries of Captain Lewis," a parody of a poem by Barlow on the same theme.

¹⁰⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 288.

The dedication of *The Vision of Columbus* to Louis XVI was intended primarily as an expression of gratitude to France for her aid during the American Revolution. But Barlow's awe-struck deference here toward the "glorious descendant" of the House of Bourbon who is privileged "to act those things as a Monarch which another can only contemplate as a Philosopher or image in the flights of poetry,"¹⁰⁶ is very much in contrast with his later contempt for a king whose dethronement he had in the meantime strongly favored. He dedicated *The Columbiad* to his friend Fulton, who was to him the symbol of the new era. In fact, the dedication to the king had been omitted in later American editions of the poem in its earlier form as well as in the London second edition of 1787.¹⁰⁷

In the preface of *The Columbiad*, to which there is no corresponding portion in the early editions of *The Vision of Columbus*, Barlow tells his readers how in its moral and political tendency he hopes his poem will be more beneficial to society than the classical epics, however far it may fall short of them in poetical distinction. He could not take off his republican glasses even when judging a work of art. He thinks that the *Iliad* has been one

106 *The Vision of Columbus* (2d ed.; Hartford, 1792), p. iv. Here, too, he had given free rein to his prophetic powers: "The great Father of the House of Bourbon will be held in the highest veneration till his favorite political system shall be realized among the nations of Europe and extended to all mankind."

107 Why the dedication was omitted in the London second edition of 1787 and retained in the Hartford second edition of 1792 is not clear. Perhaps Barlow merely wished not to offend the susceptibilities of Americans whose remembrance of the aid of Louis in their own revolution was still vivid.

of the most mischievous forces in history because it has kept the principle of privilege alive and debased the conception of the average man.

Its obvious tendency was to inflame the minds of young readers with enthusiastic ardor for military fame; to inculcate the pernicious doctrine of the divine right of kings; to teach both prince and people that military plunder was the most honorable mode of acquiring property; and that conquest, violence, and war were the best employment of nations, the most glorious prerogative of bodily strength and of cultivated mind. How much of the fatal policy of states and of the miseries and degradations of social man, has been occasioned by the false notions of honor inspired by the works of Homer, it is not easy to ascertain . . . My veneration for his genius is equal to that of his most idolatrous readers; but my reflections on the history of human errors have forced upon me the opinion that his existence has really proved one of the signal misfortunes of mankind.¹⁰⁸

The *Aeneid* likewise, great monument of human intellect though it is, violates the dignity of common humanity, its real purpose being "to increase the veneration of a people for a master, whoever he might be, and to encourage . . .

108 *The Columbiad*, first edition, pp. vii-viii. See also the note to Bk. X, l. 261. In one of the unpublished papers preserved in the Pequot Library, he offers a prize of \$100 for "the best treatise" written on the question, "What are the practicable means of rendering the cultivation of the fine arts in America the most beneficial to political liberty?" "It is a mortifying truth," he declares, "that the fine arts have almost uniformly employed their services & lent their aid in favor of despotism either in Church or State or both." See also in the "Barlow Papers" the extract from an unpublished letter of Barlow to John Hurford Stone on the essential antagonism between epic poetry and the democratic outlook. This passage is preserved in the manuscript volume "Miscellaneous Notes."

the great system of military depredation." Barlow proposes in his poem to make "the fictitious object of the action" subordinate to the real object of the poem," which he thus defines :

to inculcate the love of rational liberty, and discountenance the deleterious passion for violence and war; to show that on the basis of the republican principle all good morals, as well as good government and hopes of permanent peace, must be founded; and to convince the student in political science that the theoretical question of the future advancement of human society . . . is held in dispute and still unsettled only because we have had too little experience of organized liberty in the government of nations.¹⁰⁸

Of course monarchical utterances of *The Vision of Columbus* are toned down in *The Columbiad*¹¹⁰ in conformity with the democratic dispensation. *The Columbiad* is thus instinct with a somewhat subdued though not less sincere republican fervor, a detestation of war, and an unimpaired confidence in the future of the human race.

There are many specific topics peculiar to the poem in its expanded form. Its sublimest portion is the thunderous protest against slavery and the prophecy of dire vengeance to come upon its advocates.¹¹¹ They are put into

¹⁰⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. ix-x.

¹¹⁰ See Bk. V, ll. 109-116.

¹¹¹ See Bk. VIII, ll. 211-394. His convictions against slavery were strong. See unpublished letters of May 25 and June 8, 1802, to Mrs. Barlow in the "Barlow Papers." He urged his friend Oliver Wolcott to use his influence against the introduction of slavery into the Missouri Purchase territory. In a memorandum dated Washington, July 23, 1811, he directs that his "two black servants... be free at the end of six years from the date hereof." A bill of sale shows he sold the servants for \$400.

the mouth of Atlas, the guardian genius of Africa, and addressed to Hesper, the guardian genius of America. He taunts the Americans on the inconsistency between high political pretensions and their denial of liberty to a large portion of the human race. There is a philosophical aside upon the nature of tyranny as being morally debasing to the character of the tyrant as well as to that of the enslaved. He has the Godwinian belief in the saving power of education to work a moral transformation:

Man well instructed will be always just.¹¹²

For the idealization of the divinely nurtured life and the glorification of the atonement in *The Vision of Columbus*, he substitutes praises of the triumphs of science.¹¹³ Another section¹¹⁴ which has no counterpart in the earlier poem and is plainly inspired by the philosophy of the Revolution as filtered through Paine, deals with priestcraft and kingcraft as systems built of force and fraud upon the basis of human ignorance and superstition. Many of the lines read like versified passages from *The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*.¹¹⁵ But though Barlow shared many of his ideas with Paine in 1807, he seems to have been careful not to bring upon himself the obloquy of openly avowing their friendship by naming him in the poem among the heroes of the new dispensa-

112 Bk. VIII, ll. 340.

113 *The Vision of Columbus*, Bk. VIII, ll. 411-462, and *The Columbiad*, Bk. IX, ll. 574-634.

114 Bk. IX, ll. 151-188.

115 It was this part of the poem particularly that led to attacks upon its supposed irreligion. See Todd, *op. cit.*, 220-221, and *The Eclectic Review*, VI, 403-417 (May, 1810).

tion.¹¹⁶ Among the unmistakable accretions in *The Columbiad* which indicate the influence of revolutionary ideas is the passage¹¹⁷ in which he repudiates Rousseau's doctrine of primitive man as a menace to the interests of society. The prose commentary is preferable to the poetry:

The idea that men more perfect, more moral, and more happy in some early stage of their intercourse before they cultivated the earth and formed great societies . . . that the social state of men cannot meliorate, . . . and that they are continually growing worse, is pregnant of infinite mischief. I know no doctrine in the whole labyrinth of imposture that has a more immoral tendency. It discourages the efforts of all political virtue . . . It inculcates the belief that ignorance is better than knowl-

¹¹⁶ For this, Barlow was duly taken to task by Rickman. See Rickman, *op. cit.*, p. 133. Conway (*op. cit.*, I, 63) attributes the omission to "the power of theological intimidation." At the time Paine was receiving the full brunt of the antagonism he had aroused by *The Age of Reason*. There seems to be no record of their having met during the four years between Barlow's arrival in America and Paine's death. So poorly, in fact, was Barlow informed about his friend that he, Conway thinks, was "misled" by Cheetham's report of Paine's habitual drunkenness to believe that he had been driven into degradation by his wrongs and the ingratitude of America. In general, in spite of the eloquent defense of Paine in the letter to Cheetham of 1809 (Todd, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-239), Barlow's circumspection seems to have mastered his generous impulses toward his old friend. Paine could have reasonably expected more not only on the basis of their common convictions but on that of their personal relations. In particular, it may be noted that Barlow's long absence from Paris on his mission to Algiers had been made bearable for his wife by Paine's friendship and that Paine had urged Jefferson to appoint Barlow as minister to Holland. See Conway, *op. cit.*, II, 236-237, 289.

¹¹⁷ Bk. X, ll. 393-412.

edge; that war and violence are more natural than industry and peace; that deserts and tombs are more glorious than joyful cities and cultivated fields.

Finally, we come to what perhaps is the most striking evidence of the change which the revolutionary years had brought in his feelings. He transfers from Louis XVI to the French philosophers the credit for France's coming to the aid of the young American republic. In the earlier form of the poem he is the "Great Louis" to whom the poet pays respect for his world-encircling vision and sympathy for all oppressed mankind.¹¹⁸ But in *The Columbiad* he is a "young Bourbon" who merely provides an illustration that there may come "good to nations from the scourge of kings."¹¹⁹ The philosophers of France had first seen the enslavement of man and urged the defense of freedom upon the king's attention:

In Europe's realm a school of sages trace
The expanding dawn that waits the human race; . . .
A field that feeds their hopes confirms the plan
Of well-poised freedom and the weal of man . . .
Through tears of grief that speak the well taught mind,
They hail the era that relieves mankind.
Of these the first the Gallic sages stand,
And urge their king to lift an aiding hand.
The cause of humankind their souls inspired,
Columbia's wrongs their indignation fired;
To share her fateful deeds their counsel moved
To base in practice what in theme they proved.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Bk. VI, ll. 7-22.

¹¹⁹ Bk. VII, l. 10.

¹²⁰ Bk. VII, ll. 13-38.

At last, not being able to impress him with positive argument, they artfully turn the king's hatred of Britain's power to the support of the cause of liberty.¹²¹

¶ Naturally, as with most political romanticists, when Barlow's venturing in Europe ended, his inspiration cooled; but it certainly did not harden into a reactionary mold. ¶ *The Columbiad*, it may be safely asserted, contains the residue of his revolutionary beliefs and hopes for mankind in general after those for England and France in particular had virtually passed away. ¶ The special theater of his hopes at the end was America. So rudely had they been buffeted by the winds of reaction that he was driven at last, after the heated vision of revolution had been dissipated, back to his original moorings, where he took refuge in what James Truslow Adams has called "the American dream," for which the election of his friend Jefferson had been such a signal triumph. This dream he tried valiantly to embody in *The Columbiad*. But the ringing, high-hearted prose in which his earlier radical convictions were clothed will plead against oblivion for his name far more persuasively than his poetry.

¶ It is time that historians of American literature should more generally recognize Joel Barlow as something more than a writer of good doggerel and the author of a turgid epic couched in "gaudy and inane phraseology." ¶

121 Bk. VII, ll. 40-58.

CHAPTER III

MARY HAYS, DISCIPLE OF WILLIAM GODWIN

MARY HAYS was one of that remarkable coterie of women, including Mary Wollstonecraft, Amelia Alderson, Mrs. Reveley, Mrs. Fenwick, and Mrs. Inchbald, who afforded William Godwin a sort of philosophic seraglio. Little is known of her life: no biographical sketch of her exists. As the information left by others is sparse, we must depend much upon her supposedly autobiographical novel, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*. She lived to be eighty-three, but the last forty years of her life are without a record. Soon after the decade of the French Revolution she became enveloped in an obscurity which has never lifted. Once the immediate revolutionary impulse had spent itself, she seems to have written nothing more. But in the revival of the fame of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, to both of whom she was as faithful as their shadows, she perhaps deserves more attention than she has received. In her blind discipleship she innocently reduced many of Godwin's philosophical maxims to absurdities. She thus made herself the laughing-stock of those conservatives whose sympathies were narrowed by mere respectability as well as of certain liberals whose convictions did not give them such reckless courage.

Particularly in her relations with men she carried out the doctrines of reason, sincerity, and the emancipation of woman with a thoroughness that shocked her own sex as well as the men for whose favor she bid. With her,

woman was the hunter, man the game. Since nature was very unkind to her in both face and figure, she had to resort wholly to philosophy, and Cupid's wings were promptly clipped. Rousseau's dictum that "energy of sentiment is the characteristic of a noble soul" she accepted with a vengeance. Though she adopted Godwin's belief in the power of reason to direct feeling, she did not exemplify it in practice.

If we are to accept the *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* as an adumbration of her early life, she received her first draught of republican ideas from her childhood reading of Plutarch, the perusal of whom she finished with "her mind pervaded with republican ardour, her sentiments elevated by a high-toned philosophy, and her bosom glowing with the virtues of patriotism."¹ As a child, too, she wept over the sorrows of St. Preux.²

In 1792, at the age of twenty-two, she made her literary debut with a reply to Gilbert Wakefield's *On the Propriety of Public Worship*, published as No. I of *Letters and Essays* (1793). The influence of Price and Priestley, at this time very strong, kept her from openly breaking away from the Christian religion. She was more attracted to Unitarianism than to any of the forms of popular dissent because it "divested Christianity [as she put it] of the corruptions of scholastic jargon on the one side and of fanatic mysticism on the other."² But to her the ennobling of feeling was as true a part of religion as the satisfaction of the reason. She could not abide the emotional aridity of high church Anglicanism. In fact, her rationalism never became as soulless as Coleridge, who

¹ *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, I, 23.

² *Letters and Essays*, p. 48.

could not abide the image of Reason set up for God, later made it appear :

To hear a thing, ugly and petticoated, ex-syllogize a God with cold-blooded precision, and attempt to run religion through the body with an icicle, an icicle from a Scotch Hog-trough! *I do not endure it; my eye beholds phantoms and “ nothing is but what is not.”*³

She condemned the idea that “ salvation should be the reward of sound opinions.” Certainly she was the disciple of no arid deism in 1796 when she wrote :

After having bewildered ourselves amid systems and theories, religion returns to the susceptible mind as a *sentiment* rather than as a principle.⁴

Just when she came to know Godwin personally is not clear. That she was certainly one of the earliest converts to *Political Justice* is evident in her *Letters and Essays*, published within the same year as Godwin's book.⁵ Since she undoubtedly was drawn about this time into the circle of the liberal bookseller Joseph Johnson, her own publisher and the friend of Godwin, it is very probable that she and Godwin met in 1793. At any rate “ in 1795 or early 1796 he appears to have received a proposal of marriage from Mary Hays,”⁶ she having already courted William Frend with no success.⁷ The story of her court-

³ Letter of January 25, 1800, to Southey; see *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by E. H. Coleridge (Boston, 1895), I, 323.

⁴ *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, I, 53.

⁵ Ford K. Brown, *The Life of William Godwin* (New York, 1926), p. 109. Of this proposal Godwin discreetly makes no mention.

⁶ Associate of Coleridge at Cambridge, whence he had been expelled for freethinking in 1793.

ship of Godwin is supposed by Godwin's latest biographer to be told in *Emma Courtney* under the guise of the heroine's attachment to Augustus Harley.

The friendship with Mary Wollstonecraft began in some frank criticism⁷ which she, as Johnson's reader, had made in Paris of the preface of Miss Hays's *Letters and Essays*.⁸ She probably sought the first opportunity of a personal acquaintanceship during Miss Wollstonecraft's short stay in England in the spring of 1795 or at least soon after her final return in October. During the long agony of Mary's separation from Imlay, which was finally confirmed in March, 1796, Mary Hays, as we may safely conjecture from their later intimacy, did what she could to help her. Now that she saw her own suit with Godwin fruitless, she decided, it seems, to bestow him upon her friend. At any rate, it was at her home and by her invitation that Godwin in January, 1796, renewed his originally not very auspicious acquaintanceship⁸ with Mary Wollstonecraft. It was not long thereafter that their enmity melted into friendship and their friendship into love. Mary Hays was generous enough—and wise enough—to urge upon the couple their formal union. She was among the few friends to whom the secret of the marriage was first imparted. Twelve days after the ceremony on May 29, 1797, Godwin wrote to her:

⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft reproved for her "vain humility" in pleading the disadvantages of her education as an excuse for defects, and for her foolish thirst for that praise usually bestowed as a matter of form by men upon the work of women but denied by them in private. Her critic was simply attempting to stiffen the feminine spine. For Mary Wollstonecraft's letter, see W. Clark Durant's supplement to his edition of Godwin's *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft* (1927).

⁸ See Godwin's letter to Miss Hays, Ford K. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

My fair neighbour desires me to announce to you a piece of news which it is consonant to the regard that she and I entertain for you, you should rather learn from us than from any other quarter. She bids me remind you of the earnest way in which you pressed me to prevail upon her to change her name, and she directs me to add, that it has happened to me, like many other disputants, to be entrapped in my own toils; in short, that we found that there was no way so obvious for her to drop the name of Imlay, as to assume the name of Godwin. Mrs. Godwin—who the devil is that?—will be glad to see you at No. 29, Polygon, Somers Town, whenever you are inclined to favour her with a call.⁹

Her constancy toward the Godwins was scrupulously kept.¹⁰ On August 31, Godwin called at her house to deliver the news of the birth the day before of Mary Godwin, who was to become the wife of Shelley. Mary Hays was Mrs. Godwin's faithful attendant during the last four tragic days that ended in death on the morning of September 10, and she wrote for the grief-distracted husband some letters¹¹ which he could not bring himself to compose.

In the literary circle at Johnson's after the publication of *Emma Courtney* in 1796 she enjoyed for a while a certain celebrity. She was among the "London lions or literati" whom Lamb's George Dyer took Southey to see in March, 1797. "Mary Hays is an agreeable woman and a Godwinite," Southey wrote to Cottle.¹¹ She in-

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.

¹⁰ The letter to Mr. Hugh Skeys is very expressive of her attachment to Mary Wollstonecraft. See C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries* (London, 1876), I, 282.

¹¹ Joseph Cottle, *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey* (London, 1847), p. 152.

troduced the young Crabb Robinson to her circle, and in 1799 he accompanied her on a visit to Johnson, then confined in King's Bench Prison for selling Gilbert Wakefield's *Reply to the Bishop of Llandaff*, an intemperate revolutionary attack upon Pitt's government.

After this what little we hear of her takes the form of ridicule or downright defamation, occasioned either by her eccentricities or by her disturbing ideas. As late as 1816, when she was forty-six, Lamb saw her "prim up her chin" for George Dyer. An unreciprocated passion for Coleridge's friend Charles Lloyd led her into an imbroglio from which Lloyd himself did not escape with credit. Having vehemently attacked Godwin's ideas on marriage, Lloyd was very ill chosen by Miss Hays as a subject upon which to try out those ideas about "Sincerity" (Lamb calls it "a certain forward-looking half-brother of Truth") which Godwin had taught her. He wrote her a letter in answer to her advances in which, as he put it, was "interwoven his abhorrence of her principles with a glanced contempt of her personal character."¹² He disagreed with her on the question when and how far sincerity is a virtue. Nevertheless, he seems for a time to have taken her cue for the sake of amusement merely. For this both Southey and Coleridge condemned him. Coleridge wrote January 25, 1800 to Southey:

Charles Lloyd's conduct has been atrocious beyond what you stated. Lamb himself confessed to me that during the time in which he [Lloyd] kept up his ranting, sentimental correspondence with Miss Hays, he frequently

¹² *Works of Charles Lamb*, edited by E. V. Lucas (London, 1912), V, 157.

read her letters in company, as a subject for *Laughter*, and then sate down and answered them quite à la Rousseau!¹³

Her writings were not so "strange and wild" as her detractors made them appear. In principle she went no further than her radical contemporaries. In her *Letters and Essays* she attacks the monarchial idea with the downrightness of Paine, and she echoes Priestly on materialism and Godwin on necessity. Her materialism, she urges, is not inconsistent with the belief in a future life, the evidence of which she takes from the New Testament and not from philosophical theory.¹⁴ The materiality of the soul, which involves its dissolving with the body, does not affect the attributes of the Deity, for he can restore to the spirit its identity just as easily as he might keep it from becoming extinct. To her, necessity does not involve "a blind fatality within us," since action is determined by the bent of nature and the force of motive. To allow philosophical free-will is "indeed binding the Deity by a kind of necessity." There is nothing distressing about the moral implications of necessity:

A necessarian may pity, but he cannot hate. He will likewise be active, as he knows the end strictly to depend on the means. His ideas by no means open the door to licentiousness; for, should he have an enlightened understanding, he sees happiness to be the result of order and that vice and folly are synonymous terms.¹⁴

Though she has the metaphysical and theological urge, her intellectual faculties do not appear deep or original.

13 *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, I, 322.

14 *Letters and Essays*, p. 180.

(With the boldness of Mary Wollstonecraft she declares for the intellectual independence and dignity of her sex. The mental slavery of women which "chains them down to frivolity and trifles" and deprives them of "the glory of rationality" is condemned with Wollstonecraftian vigor. She stands for the legitimate demands of human nature which are ignored by strict religious codes. And she appeals on behalf of those women who have the rudiments of taste, but who, for lack of training must display them only in "drawing the pattern, shading the colours for a carpet or a fire-screen, and . . . fancying the ornaments to decorate their persons." She is not above an appeal to men's self-interest and vanity :)

Lovers of truth ! be not partial in your researches. Men of sense and science ! remember, by degrading our understandings, you incapacitate us for knowing your value, and make coxcombs take the place of you in our esteem . . . How impolitic to threw a veil over our eyes, that we may not distinguish the radiance that surrounds you !¹⁵

Her controversy on Helvetius with several correspondents in the *Monthly Magazine*¹⁶ reveals a doughty champion of ideas who is deep in the radical ferment. She will have nothing to do with "the obsolete notion of innate ideas"; insists that "a particular train of circumstances rather than an inborn peculiar attitude leads to a preference of one study over another" and that differences

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 80, 26. These references are grouped in the order of the quotations above.

16 See numbers for February, June, and September of 1796 and January of 1797.

of national character are directly traceable to differences in government; restates and reaffirms the principles of the sensational psychology; appeals to "universal experience" against "the notion of natural powers"; and declares that virtue no more than knowledge is born with us.

[Miss Hays was the author of two novels, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) and *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799).] *Emma Courtney* is certainly one of the most readable novels of the time. It is, as the *Monthly Review* observed, "above the class of vulgar novels,"¹⁷ comprising in fact the investigation of a moral problem—whether the expression of sincere feeling should be fettered by an established system of conduct which may be merely a fosterer of false delicacy and hypocrisy.

Emma Courtney, a beautiful and accomplished but poor woman, voluntarily submits herself to the tutorship of a celibatarian philosopher, Mr. Francis, who encourages her to use her reason. But she allows reason to become "the auxiliary of her passion," or rather she makes passion the "generative principle" of reason. She falls in love with a young man, Augustus Harley, without means, who loves her as a brother and esteems her as a friend, but who, in order to inherit a small fortune, is bound not to marry. With the conviction that it is a pernicious system of morals "which teaches us that hypocrisy can be virtue" and that "the Being who gave to the mind its reason gave also to the heart its sensibility," she reveals to him her passion and urges him to be as "ingenuous" as she. Into Emma's correspondence with Harley the

author was said by Charles Lloyd to have inserted her own love-letters to Frend and Godwin.

The heroine finally writes Harley a letter¹⁸ in which her passion for him is given full expression and in which she musters all the powers of reason against every possible species of objections to their union except the "invincible obstacle of his marriage to another." Since she is the enemy of all obscurity and mystery in personal relations, she has the "magnanimity" to declare her love directly. She proposes to break what appears to be his emotional resistance by a grand frontal attack with the artillery of reason. She is esteemed and respected.

How, then, can I believe it compatible with the nature of mind that so many strong efforts and reiterated impressions can have produced no effect upon yours? . . . My own sensibility and my imperfect knowledge of your character may have combined to mislead me. The first, by its suffocating and depressing powers, clouding my vivacity, incapacitating me from appearing to you with my natural advantages—these effects would diminish as assurance took place of doubt. The last every day would contribute to correct. Permit me, then, to hope for as well as to seek your affections, and if I do not at length gain and secure them, it will be a phenomenon in the history of mind.

To meet the financial obstacles and make it possible for him to retain his legacy, she is willing to enter into a union without legal or ecclesiastical sanction and thus make it "wholly the triumph of affection." In this way

18 II, 44-48.—All the quotations in this paragraph are from this letter.

principle would rise above prudence, "for the individuality of an affection constitutes its chastity."

The one "invincible obstacle" she later discovers: Augustus is married to another woman, whom he dislikes. Emma in despair marries a former lover. Augustus' wife dies. He, accidentally wounded, is brought to Emma's house, where he dies in her arms. Her husband becomes jealous, and his progressive degeneration sets in apace. Infidelity, infanticide, and finally suicide bear him to an ignominious end. Emma is left to devote herself to her own children and Augustus's child, to whom the book is addressed.

The violent abuse visited upon Mary Hays for this book was based upon the misunderstanding that she intended unreservedly to commend her heroine. Unfortunately her own conduct toward Godwin may have led to this interpretation, and her later infatuation for Lloyd may have confirmed it with many people. But, in the light of her experience with Godwin, one must conclude that the book was written more as an apology to him than as a challenge to others. It was really written to teach the danger of indulging an extreme sensibility. "The errors of my heroine," she plainly writes in the preface, "were the offspring of sensibility, and . . . the result of her hazardous experiment is calculated to operate as a *warning* rather than as an example."¹⁹ What is this warning? That passion should submit to the control of reason rather than that reason should be guided by passion. The young son of Augustus Harley has loved a girl who has married another. Emma tells the story of her own life to this son

in order to warn him of the consequences of enslavement to passion and of the continual use of reason to justify its dictates, of which error he seems already guilty. The power of a strong affection, she shows, may enslave reason just at it may put a host of syllogisms to flight.

Emma Courtney had come to grief because she had not acted upon Mr. Francis's, or Godwin's advice. In their philosophic correspondence Mr. Francis warns her, in answer to a letter full of romantic aspirations, against "fostering an excessive sensibility instead of cultivating her reason."²⁰ He, indeed, has no sympathy for her romantic madness. "Had you worshipped," he writes her, "at the altar of reason half as assiduously as you have sacrificed at the shrine of illusion, your present happiness might have been enviable."²¹ The person of truly independent mind will not have his happiness thus in another's keeping. In fact, the teaching of the novel had been plainly put in *Letters and Essays* three years before:

Unrestrained sensibility is ever selfish; properly regulated, it will give energy and interest to virtue; but, flattered and fostered, it is a mere specious name for imbecility.²²

²⁰ I, 63.

²¹ II, 71. In answer to this, she points out to him an essential paradox of Godwin's philosophy. All her calamities in love, she declares, have flowed "from chastity having been considered a sexual virtue"; and, since, as he has shown, we are the creatures of impression and bound by the inexorable chain of necessity, the philosopher is shrinking from his own principles. Mr. Francis dodges the problem and begins to turn the course of her ideas in order to relieve her emotional tension.

²² P. 85.

Emma's feelings towards her husband had nothing of the morbid excess which the Godwinian reason condemns. There is nothing here of the mere emotional distemper often called love. She tells him:

I feel for you all the affection that a reasonable and virtuous mind ought to feel—that affection which is compatible with the fulfilling of other duties. We are guilty of vice and selfishness when we yield ourselves up to unbounded desires and suffer our hearts to be wholly absorbed by one object, however meritorious that object may be.²³

Emma's career, then, illustrated the dangers of the effervescent Rousseauistic philosophy untempered by the sedative doctrines of Helvetius and Godwin. These are conveyed to her in the letters of Mr. Francis.

Mr. Francis is Godwin, too, in his teaching that "vice originates in mistakes of the understanding," that women are degraded by the customs of society, that inequalities of society are "the source of every misery and of every vice," that the soldier's trade is murder, and that utility is the basis of morals. But Emma's mind could not rise with Mr. Francis's into the rarefied atmosphere of abstractions and dwell there:

My mind has not sufficient strength to form an abstract idea of perfection. I have ever found it stimulated, improved, advanced by its affections.²⁴

²³ II, 116.

²⁴ II, 18. The emotional dryness of Godwin's philosophy has undoubtedly been overdrawn by his critics. In this connection, see B. Sprague Allen, "William Godwin as a Sentimentalist," *PMLA*, XXXIII (1918), 1-29. Mr. Allen concludes: "Whether he would

Augustus Harley, whom Brown²⁵ mistakenly equates with Godwin, is a political liberal only to the extent that he has foregone the privileges of the eldest male in the division of the family estate and has relinquished the law because of its chicanery; but we are told nothing about his philosophical ideas.

For the doctrine of sincerity she draws upon Holcroft; for those of feminine emancipation, upon Miss Wollstonecraft. The checking of the natural man by suppressing our affections instead of expressing them with unequivocal sincerity "injures the mind, converts the mild current of gentle and genial sympathies into a destructive torrent and . . . has been one of the most miserable mistakes in morals."²⁶ In a letter²⁷ to Mr. Francis she puts the case of woman denied what should be the inheritance of her nature:

have admitted it is a question, but the fact is that the inmost shrine of his philosophy might be entered by way of either the reason or the feelings. The preference seems to have been for the latter way, if we can judge by the character and writings of his most ardent disciples." Among these disciples this was particularly true of Mary Hays. Perhaps Mr. Francis is too austere a portrait for the Godwin whom she knew.

²⁵ See *op. cit.*, p. 110. There seems to be nothing as a basis for such identification but the mere report that Miss Hays introduced some of her letters to Godwin into the correspondence between Emma and Harley. Godwin, as Mr. Francis, is given the dignified rôle of philosophical mentor, a part which we know he played in real life. Emma's love for Mr. Francis is purely platonic. Brown also confuses Augustus Harley with his son.

²⁶ II, 55.

²⁷ I, 118-124.

While men pursue interest, honour, pleasure, as accords with their several dispositions, women who have too much delicacy, sense, and spirit to degrade themselves by the vilest of all interchanges, remain insulated beings, and must be content tamely to look on without taking any part in the great, though often absurd and tragical, drama of life.

She will "not recommend to general imitation" that the woman shall take the initiative in love. But she asks in her letter :

When mind has given dignity to natural affections; when reason, culture, taste, and delicacy have combined to chasten, to refine, to exalt, to sanctify them—is there then no cause to complain of rigour and severity, that such minds must either passively submit to a vile traffic or be content to relinquish all the enduring sympathies of life.

The observance of artificial precepts under such circumstances is consistent neither with the voice of nature nor with the dignity of mind. Of the privileges of thinking, too, she saw woman so long deprived that she was careless of claiming and hardly capable of exercising them. The puerilities of feminine conversation made Emma Courtney seek the society of men. It was in a rebellious mood that at a party she noted "the adjournment of the ladies into the drawing room, whither I was compelled, by a barbarous and odious custom, reluctantly to follow, and to submit to be entertained with a torrent of folly and impertinence."²⁸

The Victim of Prejudice is the undistinguished story of a beautiful and virtuous girl whose mother is both a prostitute and a murderer. The daughter is educated according to the plan of Rousseau, and prays to the God of nature and of reason. She becomes the victim of prejudice when the circumstances of her birth make impossible her marriage with a man of worth and breeding. The book is a protest against the injustice of society's visiting the sins of the parents upon the children. It won short shrift from that journalistic baiter of radicalism, the *Anti-Jacobin Review*:

To your distaff, Mary, to your distaff! On the style of her writing it is needless to remark; who stays to admire the workmanship of a dagger wrenched from the hands of an assassin?"²⁹

But her next publication received the disapprobation even of such tolerant organs as the *Monthly* and *Annual Reviews*. This was her *Female Biography*, issued in six volumes in 1803. It was a project which Mary Wollstonecraft would have highly approved, though it is of very uneven literary excellence. By presenting the accomplishments of women who reflect the greatest credit upon their sex, the author hoped to excite a rivalry nobler than that of beauty and equipage, and to "substitute, . . . for the evanescent graces of youth, the more durable attractions of a cultivated mind."³⁰ One instance of her liberal prepossessions will have to suffice. The account of the martyrdom, under Henry VIII, of Anne Askew, the fearless advocate of the exercise of the private conscience in religion, is thus concluded:

29 III, 58.

30 P. iv.

All who have attached important consequences to speculative theology, have . . . employed it for the extirpation or the annoyance of those who, doubting the propriety of a *standard mind*, have presumed to exercise their own judgments.³¹

Both of the above reviews object to the biographer's indifference to the moral implications in the lives of women more noted for their talents than for their virtues, accounts of whom, thinks the *Annual Review*, "might have been sacrificed with advantage to the *sacred ignorance* . . . of female youth."³²

But what most stirred up the watch-dogs of the public conscience was the ideas about marriage in *Emma Courtney*, especially the opinion that "the purity of an attachment consists in its individuality." The *Anti-Jacobin Review*, with incredible lack of charity, buried her, along with Helen Maria Williams, Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft, under an avalanche of abuse. It thought that the book "outhelens even the wife or the mistress of Stone," and declared that it "cannot but think the forbearance of the philosopher Godwin and his worthy disciples to act up to the principles which they professed when so glorious an opportunity occurred for reducing them to practice, was an instance of unphilosophical pusillanimity."³³

Lloyd attacks her by indirection in his novel *Edmund Oliver* (1798). Gertrude Sinclair, a devotee of "gen-

³¹ I, 111. It is strange that the life of Mary Wollstonecraft was not included in this work, though Miss Hays had written her obituary for the *Monthly Magazine* (IV, 232-233).

³² I, 612.

³³ I, 55; V, 39-40.

eral principles," breaks her troth with her childhood lover, Edmund Oliver, using Godwin's philosophy concerning promises as her defense. She then takes the initiative in love and practices Miss Hays's "Sincerity" with her paramour, Edward D'Oyley, a "dashing modern democrat" whom she has met at a "reading party" conducted by a circle of Godwinians at Bristol and whose impulses are vitiated by his philosophy. She and D'Oyley enter into intimate relations without benefit of marriage; but she is soon thereafter afflicted by her conscience though having sincerely acted from the beginning in conformity with what she regarded as "sublime and elevated notions." D'Oyley, who turns out to be a married man, finally abandons her. She bears his illegitimate child, is disowned by her family, and ends miserably, the victim of Godwin's philosophy. The author quotes from *Emma Courtney* as the inspiration for Gertrude's decision to go to any absurd length in the exercise of the understanding and as the source of such ideas as the following:

Love is not as some suppose a blind and unreasoning instinct—it is a passion that may be heightened, and perhaps owes its origin to physical sympathies, but its growth, like that of any other of our qualities, depends on the permission of the will, on the perception of fitness in the object.³⁴

The *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* was the chief begetter of Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800), an anti-revolutionary novel in which "some of the opinions conveyed to the young and

unthinking through the medium of philosophical novels, is exhibited in the character of Bridgetina,"³⁵ who, the author further tells us, " seems indebted to Emma Courtney for some of her finest thoughts."³⁶ To Miss Hays's Bridgetina Botherim, Holcroft plays Mr. Glib and Godwin plays Mr. Myope. As a character Bridgetina is burlesqued far too much to be convincing, and the real problem of Mary Hays's book is blandly ignored. Reputedly learned and exceedingly homely, Bridgetina has stuffed her head so full of metaphysics under the influence of Glib and Myope that she is unfitted for the common duties of life and quite unconscious of her lack of looks and manners. She seizes every occasion to parrot Godwinian precepts about gratitude, necessity, duty, the system of rewards and punishments, the domestic affections, perfectibility, general benevolence, marriage, general utility, ecclesiastical tyranny, and the omnipotence of mind over matter—sometimes even to the exasperation of Mr. Myope himself. She besieges the heart of Henry Sidney, but neither her effusions of sensibility nor the bombardment of the artillery of reason avails. She considers her contempt of chastity "as an exalted proof of female heroism and virtue."³⁷ But, like Emma, little as she in her philosophy seems to value her chastity, she never surrenders it. She, Glib, and Myope become enamoured of the idea of emigrating to the land of the Hottentots, where

35 P. xv.

36 II, 85n.

37 III, 106.

they expect to find the Age of Reason exemplified.³⁸ Vallaton, a philosophic rake and disciple of Myope, seduces Julia, Bridgetina's sister in philosophy, and sets off for France, with all the money collected for the Hottentot enterprise, in the company of Emmeline, a time-worn French wanton who goes under the name of "the Goddess of Reason." Bridgetina is finally brought to her senses by the deathbed plea of the ruined Julia that she "in the sober duties of life forget the idle vagaries which our distempered brains dignified with the name of philosophy."³⁹

Whether Mary Hays's militant and romantic radicalism ever became subdued to this extent or whether she was content all her life to suffer, like Emma Courtney, "the moral martyrdom of those who have courage to act upon advanced principles," we do not know. But against the opprobrium which her unconventional ideas won her, we can set the testimony of Henry Crabb Robinson, who knew her until her death, who had very little tolerance for moral derelictions, and whose opinion will be conclusive enough to most modern readers:

She confessed Mary Wollstonecraft's opinions with more zeal than discretion. This brought her into disrepute among the rigid, and her character suffered—but most undeservedly. Whatever her principles may have been, her conduct was perfectly correct.⁴⁰

³⁸ This burlesque of the Pantisocratic scheme is unfair to Godwin and his followers, who did not preach reversion to the state of noble savagery and in whose picture of the perfect society there was nothing of the primitive.

³⁹ III, 349-350.

⁴⁰ *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, edited by Thomas Sadler (Boston, 1869), I, 37. See also *Henry Crabb Robinson on*

There is no evidence, however, that she ever brought her own reason into submission to the established system of conduct which a prudential world lays upon every free-born spirit.^{41/}

Books and their Writers, edited by Edith J. Morley (London, 1938), I, 130-131, 234-235; III, 843.

41 In fact, Robinson in a note on her death remarks that she had "stuck fast" in her liberal opinions (*Ibid.*, II, 629).

Some of the obscurity which has enveloped Miss Hays's youth and later maturity has been dispelled by J. M. S. Tompkins in "Mary Hays, Philosophess," *The Polite Marriage* (Cambridge, 1938). She has had access to family letters not available to me and has thus been able to present more fully than here the emotional nexuses that make up so large a part of any biography of Mary Hays. The few facts unearthed about her later life show her feminism unimpaired, though her radicalism otherwise was subdued to an active benevolence among "the labouring poor."

CHAPTER IV

MRS. MARY ROBINSON: A STUDY OF HER LATER CAREER

THE glamorous early years of Mrs. Mary Robinson have been allowed to obscure her later more solid contributions to the serious life and thought of her time.¹ The adventures of a dangerously beautiful woman have alone kept her name alive. She has been remembered only in the breach of the decencies and sanctities of life, whereas she should be remembered as well in the observance of them. Her memory has been shorn of the credit of the real literary accomplishments which represented the more excellent part of her character. Numerous "authentic histories" and "novels founded on fact" have told the story of her romantic attachment to George IV when Prince of Wales and its disillusioning end. But no one has assigned her the station of intellectual dignity to which her powers of mind entitle her. That she had brains as well as beauty must have accounted in part for the interest of men like Fox, Murphy, Garrick, Sheridan, Reynolds, Godwin, and Coleridge in her. Yet few would have accepted the prediction of a writer in 1791 "that the picture of the fair writer's mind will long outlive the portrait of her person, though drawn by the pencil of a Reynolds."¹ Even during her stage career, before the powers of her mind were fully unfolded, Garrick,

¹ *Analytical Review*, July, 1791.

Reynolds, Burke, and Wilkes were her admirers; "her house," writes Peter Pindar, "was the rendezvous of talents." Even while she lived with the Prince she was in close association with many of the most brilliant young minds in English politics. Fox, in particular, seems to have recognized her intellectual capacities. In fact, her alleged liaison with him can only be fully explained by the fact that he satisfied her sometimes pathetic craving for intellectual companionship. "She reserved her esteem and deference," wrote Peter Pinder, "for those only whose talents or whose merits claimed the homage of the mind."² The Duchess of Devonshire, famous beauty, patron of letters, and political liberal,³ honoured her with her friendship and patronage for twenty years. Mrs. Robinson's versatility was not by any means confined to Drury Lane and Ranelagh. Poetry of astonishingly varied forms, novels, pamphlets, plays poured from her pen—at least twenty-seven volumes of them besides numerous scattered pieces.

In most of this voluminous output there was a cultivated cleverness that stopped short of genius. But the statement by Joseph Knight in the *Dictionary of National Biography* that her talents were "imaginary" is simply an evidence of how her name still suffers from appraisors who have not thrown off the influence of the coarse satires which from 1781 plagued her peace. The bad eminence

² *Memoirs of Mary Robinson*, pp. 185, 243. The quotations are taken from the portion written by Peter Pindar. I have used her daughter's edition, with introduction and notes by J. Fitzgerald Molloy, Philadelphia, 1895.

³ While once canvassing for Fox she bought the vote of a butcher with a kiss and was assured by a complimentary Irish mechanic that he could light a pipe at her eyes.

to which her irregular connections with men of public importance raised her made it inevitable that her ideas should be discounted. Add to this their frequent revolutionary trend, and the defamation of her as a writer is easily explained.

On the other hand, in much of the contemporary praise of her literary work the aesthetic seems to have invalidated the literary judgment—so great was the power of her charm. Godwin's latest biographer⁴ thinks that the philosopher's deep interest in her was based primarily upon her personal charm rather than upon her discipleship, undeniable as this was in some respects. Most of her literary friends in her days of dalliance were quite disposed in the presence of her beauty to exercise great tolerance and were ready to act upon such a plea as Pope made for Belinda:

If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face and you'll forget them all.

Even the Rev. Richard Polwhele provides us in his *Unsexed Females* with the amusing spectacle of a militant moralist almost debauched by “awful beauty” when it “puts on all its arms.”⁵

⁴ Ford K. Brown, *Life of William Godwin* (New York, 1926), p. 108.

⁵ He wishes that she had an inspiriting belief in immortality. And then, in the golden purity of the New Jerusalem, he could indulge his admiration without a sense of guilt. Even this son of God had seen the daughter of man that she was fair: “I have seen her ‘glittering like the morning star, full of life and splendor and joy.’ Such and more glorious may I meet her again when the just ‘shall shine forth as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever.’” (Page 22n)

¶ There had been little in her birth to predispose her to democratic sympathies, though her mother was descended collaterally from John Locke. Her rearing, too, had had a due infusion of aristocratic prejudice. But in her contact with the great she had learned through bitter experience how unconscionably wrongs were committed in the name of aristocratic privilege not only upon the poor but also upon those who cling to the skirts of wealth and power. ¶ In the days of her association with Fox, however, if she had thought on politics at all, she would have at first instinctively opposed the sovereignty of the king to the sovereignty of the people. Not until she had begun some time afterwards to fill her enforced leisure from the *beau monde* with intellectual activity did the enforcement of the rights of man mean much more to her than the adjustment of the wrongs of impoverished aristocrats.

¶ In tracing the thread of revolutionary thought through her writings, we are, then, dealing principally with this later portion of her life which the romantic biographies⁶ largely ignore. ¶ Incidentally we shall take occasion to fill in other details of her life which indicate the growing seriousness of her mind. Unfortunately the part of the memoirs in her own hand ends just at the point where her life becomes most interesting for the purposes of our study, and their continuation by Peter Pindar covers the last twenty years in a very cursory fashion.

Her life was a curious compound of romance and tragedy. Her unfortunate marriage at sixteen to a young man of supposed fortune but hardly more than a worthless

⁶ Stanley V. Makower, *Perdita, a Romance in Biography* (New York, 1908), and E. Barrington, *The Exquisite Perdita* (New York, 1926).

adventurer—a marriage urged by her mother to shield her from importunate suitors; her sharing of her husband's ten months' imprisonment for debt; her introduction to the theater by Garrick, Murphy, and Sheridan; her triumphs as Juliet and Perdita; her plunge into the world of fashion; her liaison with the Prince of Wales, the last chapter of which was written in 1783 when Fox obtained for her an annual pension of £500 after the Prince had defaulted on his bond of £20,000—all this does not belong to our story. Perhaps enough, however, has not been said about how she used her influence to keep the Prince from unfilial rebellion and how she grew graver as he grew wilder. From him she learned that women are not supposed, as Pope put it, to have characters at all; that is, that they must reflect the moods and minister to the whims of their masters. And she began eventually to chafe under the idea that women should be left only the crumbs of privilege by the other sex.

Her intimacy with Fox⁷ and Tarleton brought her close to the current of political events and stimulated her intellectual powers.⁸ Fox was working for the political independence of the Prince from the Crown, with himself as the prime minister in the offing; and Sheridan was lending his brilliant talents to the same end. They both worked with her in trying to rescue the Prince from the sinister influence of his uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, who was determined to ruin him by dissipation and thus spite the King. Fox urged her, when the affections of

⁷ During the period when Fox was cultivating Mrs. Robinson he held the foreign secretaryship in the Rockingham ministry (March-July, 1782), the secretaryship of the treasury in the Shelburne ministry (July, 1782-April, 1783), and the foreign secretaryship in the Coalition ministry (April-December, 1783).

the Prince began to wane, to use her gifts to gain an independence from the world. At the same time, however, he was willing to play the Prince's game if it involved his own political fortune. Fate threw her at last into Fox's hands, since he alone through his power in Parliament was able to realize anything from the Prince's financial promises. He flattered her on her poetical powers and used his influence with the *Morning Post* to have some of her poems published. What began, however, as a union of mind is thought by many to have become something grosser as her original repulsion was gradually worn down by his handsome kindnesses. She is said later to have canvassed in the famous Westminster election of 1784 and to have joined in the cries of "Fox and Freedom." Before then, however, Fox had tired of her. To escape the notoriety which had been drawn to her as a result of his settlement of her claims on the Prince, she spent two months in Paris in 1783. Here she is said to have received a gift from Marie Antoinette and was ardently courted by the Duke of Orleans, who gave her a splendid fête but was spurned for his pains.

Tarleton was a Whig, who in spite of his distinguished service in America was greeted by George III upon his return: "Well, you have been in a great many actions, had a great many escapes." His suit, which had begun while Fox was in favour, was pursued with great ardour upon Mrs. Robinson's return from Paris and her settlement at Brighton. He and Mrs. Robinson had disagreed only in their attitudes towards American ideas of liberty. This friendship lasted with interruptions until her death. But it was to occasion the tragedy which cut such a cleavage between her earlier and her later life. Upon

her return to London in the spring of 1783, she learned that he was on the point of sailing into exile to escape imprisonment for debts. In a desperate attempt to reach his ship she was exposed in a storm and contracted a fever which soon left her a helpless paralytic for the rest of her life. In 1790 she aided him, still deeply devoted to her, in his *History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of America*. But by the summer of 1792 his affections too had found a fairer haven. She accepted his ingratitude without reproach.

But by this time she was well launched upon her literary career and was quite willing to give up the doubtful game of hearts, for which she had already reluctantly sacrificed the promise of a brilliant career on the stage. The baths of Aix-la-Chapelle and St. Amand having been found powerless to arrest her malady, she settled down in 1787 to an intense literary activity in the output of which were sublimated the hopes and despairs of her early life and the severer reflections of a chastened middle age. Adversity had struck her to the earth of reality and she was never again to dwell in the world of impossible make-believe. She met her sufferings with a strength of soul unterrified and unsubdued. Boaden writes of her as she appeared in 1794:

She disdained to intrude upon conversation any evidence of pain actually suffered at the moment. So that at the jests of others and sometimes during her own repartee, the countenance preserved its pleasant expression while a cold dew was glistening upon the forehead.⁸

⁸ James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble* (Philadelphia, 1825), I, 335-336.

And her biographer in *Public Characters* for 1800 remarks: "Mrs. Robinson, even in the *remains* which grief and malady have left her, has more of personal beauty than most women in the Maytime of their attractions."⁹

Outwardly of course her later life was comparatively uneventful. In July of 1792 while en route to Spa, Flanders, she was stopped at Calais by the rumblings of the Revolution. Much of her time here was spent in "listening to the complaints of the impoverished aristocrats or in attending to the air-built projects of their triumphant adversaries."¹⁰ She left Calais on September 2, barely escaping the general arrest restraining all British subjects in France. During 1793 and 1794 she was pursued by her calumniators so relentlessly that, although "the respect of the liberal part of society she always retained,"¹¹ she declared it her purpose at one time to "quit England forever."¹² But she survived the harrying of satirists and creditors to enjoy for a time the few friendships which the riper years had won her. Even the Prince of Wales with the Duke of York had the grace to call upon her in her retirement, but Mrs. Siddons, whose pity and admiration she had won, was led to forego her acquaintance because of the fear that she "would

9 Miss Hawkins less sympathetically contrasts the vain display of the halcyon days of the Prince's favour with the faded magnificence and helplessness of her later life. (See *Laetitia-Matilda Hawkins, Memoirs, Anecdotes, Facts, and Opinions* (London, 1824), II, 24, 34.

10 *Memoirs of Mary Robinson* (London, 1824), p. 223.

11 James Boaden, *op. cit.*, I, 336.

• 12 Letter to John Taylor of October 5, 1794, quoted in *Memoirs of Mary Robinson*, p. xii.

draw down the malice and reproach of those prudent people who never do ill.”¹³

The most interesting of her later friendships were those with Godwin and Coleridge. Godwin met her through the poet Merry in 1796 and referred to her in his diary as “a most accomplished and delightful woman.”¹⁴ Their intercourse, however, seems to have been as much social as philosophical. Her hold over him was maintained until the last, though only a few letters of their correspondence, belonging to the year 1800, are extant. In one of them she confides to him her distress at being under arrest for debt of which the overdue annuities from the government would have relieved her. She refuses for the sake of her husband, from whom she had not been legally separated, to resist the action as a married woman and turns her back to the world with defiant scorn to find a refuge in Godwin’s good opinion:

I owe very little in the world, and still less *to* the world,—and it is unimportant to me where I pass my days, if I possess the esteem and friendship of its best ornaments, among which I consider *you*.¹⁵

Godwin was to use her as the model for his sympathetic sketch of Mrs. Kenwick in his novel *Fleetwood* in 1805.

The “group of fair women” among whom Godwin moved accepted Mrs. Robinson, it appears, without reservation. Paul thinks¹⁶ that Mrs. Inchbald and Mary

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

¹⁴ C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries* (London, 1876), I, 154.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 35.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, I, 159.

Wollstonecraft may have been compromised by their association with Mrs. Robinson, who, in the opinion of many people, was through the acceptance of her pension capitalizing the shame of a royal amour. Mary Wollstonecraft in her philosophical antipathy to the institution of marriage had, in the minds of the eminently respectable, placed herself on higher moral grounds than the "Perdita" of a decade or so before.

Although she was condemned by the conservative reviews as the disciple of the "monster" Godwin, she was not an unwavering adherent of his gospel of reason nor an implicit believer in its all-powerful influence. The humanitarian implications of the Godwinian philosophy, as an examination of her writings will later show, interested her more than the arcana of reason. Against religious tyranny and the abuse of the privileges of rank she had already written before meeting him and she had been looking confidently toward the millennium which the French Revolution preluded. And though by nature she had more than a due infusion of Rousseauistic sentimentalism, she subscribed heartily to Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas about the emancipation of women. In fact, she was more distinctly in the train of Mary Wollstonecraft than in that of her husband. To this her *Thoughts on the Condition of Women*¹⁷ undoubtedly testifies.¹

The friendship with Coleridge was based not only upon his admiration for her as a poet but also upon a deepening respect for her as a woman and his belief in "the inherent

17 I have been unable so far to locate a copy of this work either in America or in England. Watt (*Bibliotheca Britannica*) attributes to Mrs. Robinson *A Letter to the Women of England on the Injustice of Mental Subordination, with Anecdotes* by Anne Frances Randall (London, 1799).

purity of her mind." ¹⁸ As it was practically limited to the last year of her life, it shows how handsomely in her respectable maturity she made amends for the follies of her youth. It is thought ¹⁹ that Coleridge came to know her in London at some time between his leaving Nether Stowey in November, 1799, and his coming to Grasmere in April, 1800. A series of mutual poetical compliments ²⁰ evince their pleasure in each other's works,

18 Letter of December 27, 1802 to Miss Mary Robinson, first published by E. L. Griggs in "Coleridge and Mrs. Mary Robinson," *Modern Language Notes*, XLV, 90-95 (February, 1930), later published in his edition of *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, London, 1932, I, 232-235.

19 See E. L. Griggs, "Coleridge and Mrs. Mary Robinson," *Modern Language Notes*, XLV, 91.

20 Coleridge composed four poems in her honour. "The Snow-Drop" (1800) was inspired by Mrs. Robinson's poem on the same subject. "Alcaeus to Sappho," printed in the *Morning Post*, October, 1800, is a graceful compliment on her beauty. In "The Stranger Minstrel," written in November, 1800, which he later called "exceedingly silly" (*Letter, op. cit.*) and which the *Anti-Jacobin* thought "a strange piece of absurdity" (vol. X, 258), Mount Skiddaw is made to apostrophize the poet himself on her powers of song. It was written in response to a letter of hers—one of her last communications—expressing an intense longing to see Skiddaw once more. (For a quotation from this letter in a letter to Poole, February 1, 1801, see E. L. Griggs, "Coleridge and Mrs. Mary Robinson," *Modern Language Notes*, XLV, 92, and his edition of *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, I, 171.) In this same letter to Poole appeared his elegiac fragment, "O'er her piled grave the gale of Evening sighs." Coleridge later wrote to her daughter (Letter of December 27, 1802, *op. cit.*) that it had long been his intention to write "a poem of some length" about her mother, but this project seems to have ended merely as a good intention.

Mrs. Robinson wrote two poems for Coleridge: "Ode inscribed to the infant son of S. T. Coleridge, Esq." and "To the Poet Coleridge." The former invokes for the infant Derwent, "Inspiration's darling child," length of fame as the singer of "the mountain haunts sub-

though, as Griggs remarks, Coleridge's chivalry gained the right of way over his judgment, as it usually did when estimating women writers. On May 21, 1800, Coleridge wrote to Godwin to "remember him in the kindest and most respectful phrases to her"²¹ and to insist that she should avail herself of one of Humphrey Davy's prescriptions for rheumatism. In a letter to Poole February 1, 1801, he says that Mrs. Robinson wrote him

a most affecting, heart-rending letter a few weeks before she died, to express what she called here deathbed affection and esteem . . . Oh Poole, that that woman had but been married to a noble Being, what a noble Being she herself would have been.²²

After the appearance of Mrs. Robinson's memoirs in 1801, her daughter planned to issue a volume containing tributes by her famous literary friends. Among these she asked Coleridge for an elegy. In a letter from Keswick December 27, 1802, Coleridge very tactfully expressed his admiration for her and his conviction of the redemptive virtues of her later life.

lime" among which he was born. The latter, signed "Sappho," is a rapturous tribute inspired by "Kubla Khan." Coleridge was so impressed by her "Haunted Beach," a bit of eery moralizing suggestive of "The Ancient Mariner," that he asked Southeby to put it in his *Annual Anthology* for 1800. A recent writer has shown that Mrs. Robinson's Gothic novel *Hubert de Sevrac* (1796) "had an unmistakable part in the writing of *Christabel*." (Donald Ruel Tuttle, "*Christabel* Sources in Percy's *Reliques* and the Gothic Romance," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, LIII, 445-475, June, 1938.)

21 C. Kegan Paul, *op. cit.*, II, 4.

22 *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, I, 171 and E. L. Griggs, "Coleridge and Mrs. Mary Robinson," *Modern Language Notes*, XLV, 92.

Others flattered her, I admired her indeed, as deeply as others—but I likewise esteemed her *much*, and yearned from my inmost soul to esteem her *altogether*—Flowers, they say, smell sweetest at Eve; it was my Hope, my heartfelt wish, my Prayer, my Faith, that the latter age of your Mother would be illustrious and redemptory—that to the Genius and generous Virtues of her youth she would add Judgement and Thought—whatever was correct and dignified as a Poetess, and all that was matronly as Woman.—Such, you best know, were her own aspirations . . . In this Feeling I cultivated your Mother's acquaintance, thrice happy if I could have soothed her sorrows, or if the feeble lamp of my friendship could have yielded her one ray of Hope or Guidance—Your Mother had indeed a good, a very good, heart—and in *my* eyes, and in *my* belief, was in her latter life—a blameless Woman . . . I have said everywhere and aloud that I thought highly both of her Talents and of her Heart, and that I *hoped* still more highly of both—I was not grieved at an occasion, which compelled me often to stand forth, as her Defender, Apologist, and Encomiast.²³

But he refused to appear with a tribute in the low company of "Monk" Lewis and Tom Moore, "whose names are highly offensive to all good men and women for the licentious exercise of their Talents—and . . . who have sold provocatives to vulgar Debauchees, & vicious schoolboys." The names of these men and of Peter Pindar, even though their tributes might be morally unobjectionable, will be a discredit to her mother's memory and revive the calumny from which she had suffered.²⁴

²³ See note 18.

²⁴ The daughter seems not to have fully respected Coleridge's wishes, since, while the memorial volume was apparently not published, she

In her earlier poetry, to use her own words, she generally "courts the wild rose of fancy and asks for no more." But of the archness and gayety of spirit that charmed her lovers one finds remarkably few evidences. The *jeux d'esprit* in the collected poems are limited to a dozen. No indecorum ever got into her verse. One volume published by subscription was prefaced by a list of six hundred people of rank and talent. The Blue Stocking Club, presided over by her old forgotten mentor, Miss Hannah More, bestowed upon her at last their smile of approval. But the fact is that her mind had a pensive and melancholy cast from the beginning. The house in which she was reared at Bristol was fast by the ruined cloisters of St. Augustine's Monastery—a spot than which there was none "more calculated to inspire the soul with mournful meditation." "As soon as I had learned to read," she writes, "my great delight was that of learning epitaphs and monumental inscriptions."²⁵ She was always "agreeably depressed" by signs of decay. During the months immediately following her marriage in 1774, she and a friend "almost daily" spent their morning hours in Westminster Abbey.

It was to me a soothing and gratifying scene of meditation. I have often remained in the gloomy chapels of that sublime fabric till I became, as it were, an inhabitant of another world. The dim light of the Gothic windows, the vibrations of my footsteps along the lofty

put his *Stranger Minstrel*, against the presence of which in the *Memoirs* he had already protested, in the company of a poem by Peter Pindar among other tributes in verse prefixed to her edition of her mother's poetry in 1806.

aisles, the train of reflections that the scene inspired, were all suited to the temper of my soul; and the melancholy propensities of my earliest infancy seemed to revive with an instinctive energy which rendered them the leading characteristics of my existence. Indeed the world has mistaken the character of my mind; I have ever been the reverse of volatile and dissipated.²⁶

Her first two volumes of poetry, published in 1775, were filled with this sentimental melancholy, enhanced undoubtedly from her childhood reading in eighteenth century elegiac poetry. This darker strain in her nature, which ran somewhat beneath the surface in her days of dalliance, emerged to give the ground tone to her poetry in the years that brought the philosophic mind. What one biographer calls "a slumbering instinct for piety"²⁷ was awakened by the tragedies of her later life. "Solitude," "The Cavern of Woe," and "The Progress of Melancholy" are among the many pale flowers that blossomed in the shades of her retirement. She kept her harp hanging on the willow, and those who had known her in her earlier days were often moved to tears by her affecting stories of misfortune.²⁸ The depths of her romantic nature were stirred by her disillusioning experience; there was no crust of hardness left upon it. What little gall there was in her nature expended itself in a series of satirical odes on local and temporary subjects appearing under the unprepossessing signature of Tabitha Bramble in the *Morning Post*, of which in 1799 she was persuaded to undertake the poetical department.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

²⁷ Stanley V. Makower, *Perdita, a Romance in Biography*, p. 214.

²⁸ See her *Lyrical Tales* (1800). .

Mrs. Robinson's facility in verse-making led to a thinness in her matter for which her amazing metrical virtuosity does not compensate. Coleridge in letters²⁹ to Southey, whom she is said to have much admired, remarked upon her fullness of mind and upon the exquisite correctness of her ear. Her poetical activity, maintained while she shared her husband's imprisonment as well as when she was living at the height of fashion and luxury in Hatton Gardens, culminated in the publication of two volumes in 1791.

During the preceding year she had begun her poetical correspondence with Robert Merry under the signature of Maria. Bad as was the tasteless extravagance into which his example led her,³⁰ she followed him also in turning from the artificial nothings of society verse to the substance of things hoped for from political and spiritual emancipation. Of this the best evidence in the 1791 volumes is her "Ainsi Va le Monde," inscribed to Merry and inspired by his "Elegy Written on the Plains of Fontenoy" (1787) and his "Laurel of Liberty" (1790). From an opening of ridiculous flattery of Merry, whom she unaccountably commissions "to pluck the weeds of vitiated taste" from poetry, she turns to the new theme of liberty which recent events in France have given to poetry.

29 See letters of January 25 and February 28, 1800, *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by E. H. Coleridge, Boston, 1895, I, 322, 331-332.

30 Later she herself joined the reaction against such poetry. In *Walsingham* the poet Doleful is a palpable satirical thrust at the Della Cruscans. After having read a melancholy sonnet full of extravagant novelties in diction and imagery, some of which are taken directly from Merry's poetry, he is asked why he did not compose a dictionary of poetical epithets.

She sings the fall of the Bastille in the "terrible sublime" and emerges from the "sulphurous clouds" of her overheated imagination to view with serenity the glorious era dawning upon the world when Freedom "opes her radiant gates to *all mankind*."³¹ The volumes were better received than any of her writings. The *European Magazine*, which had published a number of her earlier poems, the *Analytical Review*, the *Monthly Review*, and the *Critical Review* praised them highly; and some of the less discriminating of her admirers called her "the British Sappho."

Among her later poems those inspired by the executions of royalty in France and "The Progress of Liberty" are the best examples of how the turn in the French Revolution which brought the Jacobins into power affected her. "Marie Antoinette's Lamentations in her Prison," written in March 1793, and "A Fragment Supposed to be Written on the Night before the Execution of Louis XVI" are undistinguished effusions in which sincere feeling is cloyed by the paraphernalia of melancholy. The long "Monody to the Memory of Marie Antoinette," written in poignant memory of her own reception at the French court ten years before, breathes more sympathy, as we might expect, for persecuted royalty than for the misguided republicans.

While *all* are *rulers*—*all*, alas! are *slaves*
Among the nobles she views with pity
The *many* suffering for the *guilty few*.

³¹ *Poetical Works of Mrs. Mary Robinson*, edited by Maria (or Mary Elizabeth) Robinson (London, 1806), I, 17, 26. The poetical references are all to this edition.

She brands atheism as the monstrous birth of liberty and laments

That *Rank* should be a Crime and *Genius hurl'd*
A mournful wand'r'er on the pitying world! ³²

"The Progress of Liberty," a 1500 line ode, is much less interesting as an attempt at Gothic magnificence than as an expression of the release of the human spirit in the revolutionary era. She first attacks religious tyranny which denies to men and women the inalienable rights of human nature. The nun, "formed for rational delights" whose natural instincts are stifled by "bigot zeal," is offered up a "preposterous sacrifice." Likewise the monk is "the wretched slave of bigotry and fraud." The negro slave deprived of his savage liberty; the victim of social injustice driven to homicide because he has refused "to load the groaning altars of the church" or "dared talk of freedom"; the maniac,

His intellectual treasures scattered wide
By persecution's strong and ruthless arm,—

all welcomed the dawn of liberty in France. But in "the frenzied agony of wrongs," ³³ many of the victims of tyranny had embraced atheism and anarchy, and the name of liberty was profaned by the cruelties of Marat and Robespierre. Later she sees Reason taking over the reins of revolution from Passion. The apostrophe to England at the end of the ode, in which she pays the conventional

32 *Ibid.*, I, 60, 73. Successive references to the same volume or work when close together are often grouped in a single note in the order of their appearance.

33 *Ibid.*, III, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17.

tribute to the traditions of British liberty while ignoring its violations during the revolutionary decade, shows how in her romantic enthusiasm for liberty in general she was blind to the tyrannical practice of the English government.

{In 1792 Mrs. Robinson began to find an outlet for her voluminousness in novels; within the next seven years she published fourteen volumes of fiction. Her first prose work, *Vancenza, or The Dangers of Credulity*, is a story of seduction} The Gothic trappings of this fifteenth century story do not conceal certain convictions which are rooted in the new philosophy and in her own experience with the great. The Count Vancenza, having removed from the "virtuous retirement" of his castle in the country to Madrid, where the depravity of human nature has more chance to assert itself, falls a victim of the "barbarous etiquette" of duelling. His family have their fling in the society of the profligate rich, filled with forbidding specimens of "elevated deformity," to learn in the end that mind, not rank, is the measure of greatness:

Little and contracted minds are apt to envy the possession of exalted titles and empty distinctions. Ignorance only descends to bestow admiration upon the gew-gaw appendages of what is commonly called rank; it fancies it beholds a thousand dazzling graces dignifying and embellishing the varnished front of artificial consequence . . . But the Enlightened Mind thinks for itself; explores the precepts of uncontaminated truth; weighs in the even scale of unbiased judgment the rights and claims of *intellectual preeminence*; exults in the attributes of *reason*; and opposes with dauntless intrepidity every innovation that dares assail even the *least* of its prerogatives.³⁴

There is the story, too, of a nun who had been "compelled to take the veil from a base and little pride which too frequently sacrifices the younger female branches of illustrious but indigent families to a barbarous and perpetual imprisonment."³⁵

Walsingham, or The Pupil of Nature (1797) shows most clearly the influence of revolutionary ideas in her fiction.³⁶ The analysis of it must suffice for our examination of her novels. It reflects the association with Godwin and his circle begun the year before, but it is not a novel of purely revolutionary purpose like Godwin's and Holcroft's.³⁷ It represents "the sentimental novel, expanding and gathering to itself politics and ethics,"³⁷ at a stage perhaps nearer to *The Man of Feeling* than to *Caleb Williams*. The novel is the long pageant of a bleeding heart, the story of one whom unmerciful disaster followed fast and followed faster till his speech one melancholy burden bore; the vocabulary of sentimental misery is utterly exhausted; and the sudden happy resolution hardly relieves the reader.

The narrative thread is broken by digressions on literary criticism and educational theory, by long desultory conversations, and by twenty-six poetical effusions; but what weakens it as a story is the exasperating improbabilities and inconsistencies of the characters. These reach their climax in an impossibility which is the very height of

35 Volume II, 64.

36 Mrs. Robinson has been left out of account in Allene Gregory's *The French Revolution and the English Novel* (New York, 1915) for this reason apparently.

37 Wilbur L. Cross, *The Development of the English Novel* (New York, 1905), p. 83.

the ridiculous. Sir Sidney Aubrey, who through 1400 pages has been the amorous and persistent rival of the hero, his dependent orphan cousin Walsingham Ainsforth, for the hand of a young lady, turns out to be a young lady himself—the daughter not the son of Lady Aubrey—and at length becomes the wife of Walsingham!

The character of the Pupil of Nature is certainly not very natural. His sensibility is so morbid that he can hardly be credited with sanity of understanding. His morality springs generally from sentiment only, not from a reasoned basis. The alternative title, *The Pupil of Nature*, is intended to suggest that Walsingham's opinions, his knowledge, and his principles are not derived from established systems, but from the immediate contact of his mind with reality itself. However, after he leaves the haunts of his childhood in the lonely vale of Glen-owen, "where the rank weeds of vice and folly are crushed by the sober hand of reason and philanthropy,"³⁸ the Pupil of Nature, plumped down amid the sophistries and inanities of high life, has little opportunity to develop the virtues which were implanted in him earlier. What he imbibed from nature as her pupil was more than counteracted by the influences of a false system of society, abetted by a cruel providence.

The false system of society is most fully displayed in the *beau monde*. Here amid "the herd of titled and exalted profligates" where he "found neither friendship, justice nor humanity," Walsingham kept with great difficulty his sense of the dignity of man learned in the school of nature and finally almost became a misanthrope. The heartlessness and "the clatter of refined nonsense" in

high society are well depicted. Lord Kencarth, a volatile, empty-headed young noble, whose rearing has been devoted to the art of killing time, uses his seat in Parliament merely as a means of self-aggrandizement. "I bought my seat," exclaims this young scapegrace, "and if Englishmen will submit their rights to the degradation of being sold, they cannot wonder at any use we think proper to make of them."³⁹ Walsingham's respect for the prevailing political system is lessened when he finds that "the perpetually grinding law mixes the pure grain of oppressed honesty with the coarse chaff of fraud and villainy."⁴⁰ He fully shares also the revolutionary philosopher's contempt for the lawyer, who mercilessly extracts his livelihood from the oppressed. Finally, the vices of the poor are traced to those of the rich, especially extravagance and debauchery.

Mrs. Robinson, while not depreciating the feminine graces, was a champion of the intellectual privileges of her sex. Her ideas on the education of woman are succinctly put in the directions which Mr. Hanbury gives for the education of his daughter:

I wish that Isabella may be instructed, not only in all the finished accomplishments which are deemed indispensable in this age of trifling, but also in the more solid and masculine lessons of improvement such as form the scholar and dignify the attributes of reason. There can be no rational objection to such a mode of education as long as woman is gifted with those mental powers which place her on an equality with man. The art of pleasing will be the natural inmate of her bosom; she will by in-

39 Volume IV, 14.

40 Volume III, 58.

stinct cultivate the softer graces ; the flattery of our sex, the vanity of her own, will instruct her to charm by feminine attractions ; but let her look beyond the trivial claims of sexual rivalry ; let her be taught to feel that she is capable of prouder, nobler accomplishments ! that she is born with reason, which should break through the trammels of custom and assert its equal rights with those tyrants who would enervate her mind and bend her lofty spirit to the yoke of ignorance and slavery.⁴¹

In fact, there seemed to be nothing of which she was surer at the end than the power of reason and the eventual triumph of philosophy over despotism :

You do not pretend to say that there are no distinctions in the human race ? [said Lady Amaranth to Walsingham]. Mental distinctions there certainly are [answered I], but setting aside the innate qualities of the heart, the prince and the peasant resemble each other more than your ladyship will readily believe. Take the offspring of the noblest parent and the hovel-born child of adversity—educate them with equal liberality—and the chance is even that the one exhibits all the attributes of reason, all the graces of illustrious virtue, as proudly as the other.⁴²

Mrs. Robinson had not read Godwin on inequality for nothing. “ Had not such men as Rousseau and Voltaire existed,” she concludes, “ the earth had still been shackled by tryanny and superstition.” But that she was not an extreme perfectibilian is plain in the portrait of Dr. Pimpernel, an advocate of the “ New Philosophy.” He

41 Volume I, 232-233.

42 Volume III, 262-263.

is drawn more with amusement at his manners than with outright sympathy for his ideas, most of which evaporate into a mist of extravagant exclamations.

But her comparative moderation did not keep the satirists and political heresy-hunters off her trail. Of course in the *Baviad* (1791) Gifford gibbeted her with the other sentimental ladies of the correspondence with Merry, inviting us to

See Cowley brisk it to one ding-dong chime,
 And weekly cuckold her poor spouse in rhyme;
 See Thrale's grey widow with a satchell roam,
 And bring in pomp her laboured nothings home;
 See Robinson forget her state and move
 On crutches tow'rds the grave to 'Light of Love'⁴³

And in a later note to his introduction to the *Maeviad* (1795) he thus spits his venom at her memory:

This wretched woman, indeed, in the wane of her beauty fell into merited poverty, exchanged poetry for politics, and wrote abusive trash against the government at the rate of two guineas a week for the *Evening Post*.⁴⁴

He also vilified her in his *Epistle to Peter Pindar*. (1800) The *Monthly Review* reproved him for the acrimony and indelicacy of such attacks, and William Hazlitt⁴⁵ and Leigh Hunt⁴⁶ were offended by his brutal,

⁴³ Lines 23-27.

⁴⁴ Page 56. I have used a joint edition of the *Baviad* and *Maeviad* published by Murray in 1811.

⁴⁵ See "Mr. Gifford" in *The Spirit of the Age*.

⁴⁶ Hunt's attack upon Gifford in his *Feast of the Poets* (1800) was first aroused by the passage on Mrs. Robinson in the *Baviad*. In fact, Gifford's attack on her marks the beginning of the famous

vulgar, and unmanly satire of a woman whose later career had won their respect. Mathias in that farrago of insults, *The Pursuits of Literature*, (1794-97) charged Mrs. Robinson and her sister radicals with abusing the minds of young women, "whining or fretting in novels till our girls' heads turn wild with impossible adventures, *and now and then are tainted with democracy.*"⁴⁷ The Rev. Richard Polwhele in *The Unsexed Females* (1798), a title used with reference to "those literary ladies in Great Britain who have thrown aside that modesty which is the most characteristic and the most brilliant ornament of their sex and who, with unblushing front, have adopted the sentiments and the manners of the impious amazons of republican France," places Mrs. Robinson, along with Mrs. Barbauld, Mrs. Charlotte Smith, Helen Maria Williams, and Mary Hays, in the pernicious train of Mary Wollstonecraft's followers. In a note on Mrs. Robinson, who at the instance of Mary Wollstonecraft "to Gaul her Fancy gave," he considers her novels merit censure especially because of the "doctrines of Philosophism."⁴⁸ It is evident that she herself felt that much criticism of her literary endeavors was biassed by her critics' antagonism towards liberal ideas.

At the end, her most constant friends were those whom conservative public opinion was persecuting. Through them she won something of the peace which she had found, though at an appalling cost, that the world could

enmity between him and Hunt. (See the Oxford edition of Hunt's *Poetical Works* (1923), pp. 148, 167, 708, 711, and Hunt's *Autobiography* (New York, 1850), I, 254.

⁴⁷ Part I, 14n.

⁴⁸ Pages v and 20.

not give and on December 26, 1800, died in the arms of a dutiful daughter. As she was borne to the grave on the last day of the year, Peter Pindar and William Godwin were the only attendants. Of course among "the good and wise" the ghost of the exquisite and reckless "Perdita" never downed.⁴⁹ But to think of her as merely "a scribbling lady of pleasure" does justice neither to her heart nor to her mind.

49 Fifty years later, for example, the compiler of an anthology of poems by British women observed in writing of her later life: "The subsequent course of her life was one of shame, rendered the more melancholy by the exhibition of mental powers which would have adorned a life of virtue." (George W. Bethune, *The British Female Poets*, Philadelphia, 1849).

CHAPTER V

ROBERT LOVELL AND GEORGE BURNETT, MINOR DISCIPLES OF PANTISOCRACY

THE literature of political enthusiasm, since it is largely the product of eager youth aflame with Utopian visions, may often provide a very poor exhibition of the powers of understanding. But it is rich in what Bacon calls “the virtues of the will and the affections.” This is true of the literature of the early period of the French Revolution in England and particularly of its most splendid vagary, the scheme of Pantisocracy fathered by Coleridge and Southey. And it is true even more particularly of the two minor disciples of Pantisocracy, Robert Lovell and George Burnett. Because they did not grow to intellectual stature comparable with that of their friends, they have not perhaps received full credit for their part in the Pantisocratic enterprise. The average reader has been so blinded by the coruscations from the minds of the youthful Coleridge and Southey that he has seen very obscurely the figures and knows little of the careers of the minor members of the original company of Utopian dreamers.¹

No biographical sketch of Robert Lovell exists. The *Dictionary of National Biography* does not honour him with an article. We first meet him in a letter of Southey to Grosvenor C. Bedford from Bath December 14, 1793:

The gentleman who brings this letter must occupy a few lines of it. His name is Lovel. I know him but

very little personally, though long by report; you must already see he is eccentric . . . I wish your opinion of him. Those who are superficially acquainted with him feel wonder; those who know him, love. This character I hear . . . Mr. Lovell has very great abilities; he writes well: in short I wish his acquaintance myself . . . My knowledge of him, I again repeat, is very confined; his intended bride I look upon as almost a sister, and one should know one's brother-in-law.¹

Lovell, then, had evidently met Southey through the Fricker family at Bath in late 1793. By the time Southey returned to Bristol from Oxford in July 1794, Lovell had already married Mary Fricker.¹ At this time he was apparently won over by Southey to Pantisocracy, hatched at Oxford a few weeks before, and their relations soon became very intimate. Coleridge, returning, a-quiver with the Utopian gospel, from his Welsh tour with Hucks, welcomed Lovell into their company. Southey

¹ *Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, edited by Charles Cuthbert Southey (London, 1849), I, 195-196. The statement in *Literary Memoirs of Living Authors* (1798), II, 217, that Lovell was a fellow-student of Southey at Oxford, is obviously incorrect. Southey did not return to the university at once after the summer vacation of 1793. In fact, he did not return till January, 1794. In the above letter Lovell is further described as "a young man of two and twenty who has been his own master since fifteen and who owes all his knowledge to himself."

² Mary Fricker was an actress for a time. She seems to have been a woman of learning as well as of spirit, even keeping up her Latin and French at ninety, less domestic than Edith (Mrs. Southey) and apparently better balanced than Sarah (Mrs. Coleridge). Shelley wrote of them in 1812: "Mrs. Southey is very stupid; Mrs. Coleridge worse. Mrs. Lovell . . . is the best of them." (*Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Roger Ingpen [London, 1914], I, 209). She lived with the Southey family until her death.

and Coleridge at once set out for Huntspill, Somersetshire, the home of George Burnett.¹ At Stowey on this trip about mid-August they came to know Thomas Poole and heard of the death of Robespierre with undaunted democratic feelings. It was during Coleridge's several weeks' stay at Bristol upon their return that one night at Lovell's house in a sportive conversation the three agreed by the next evening to write a play on the fall of Robespierre, each doing an act—Coleridge the first, Southey the second, and Lovell the third. The scene of the first act was to be the Tuilleries, that of the second and third the Convention. Southey and Lovell completed theirs by the appointed time. But, since Lovell's was out of keeping with the others, Southey rewrote it the next day, by which time Coleridge had finished his. Southey, merely putting news stories into blank verse, succeeded very well in representing the French Convention as a chamber of horrors. "Surely," as one writer observes, "no two authors have ever shown a rarer proof than this of generosity toward a third."² Coleridge, after having failed to find a publisher in Bristol, carried the manuscript to Cambridge in September, where Benjamin Flower printed it as a pamphlet.

¹ Lovell soon became a very active propagandist of the Pantisocratic cause. Southey, recognizing him as his most reliable lieutenant, commissioned him on a trip to London in October to look into the will of the Cannon Southey family at Doctor's Commons "to see what could be done, in the reversion way."³ He found that nothing could be done, but he did succeed in selling the manuscript

³ John Charpentier, *Coleridge, The Sublime Somnambulist* (New York, 1929), p. 75.

of *Wat Tyler*⁴ for his friend to the bookseller Ridgeway, who was soon to land in Newgate for assuming the freedom of the press. London was then astir with excitement over the famous state trials of Hardy and his followers. Lovell immediately called on Holcroft at Newgate, introducing himself and Pantisocracy and urging Holcroft to join the brotherhood. Holcroft advised him, if possible, not to leave the kingdom to set up their experiment toward social happiness, and he did not like some of the moral implications of the scheme. Later, after Holcroft's release in December, Lovell wrote from Bristol to ask for a more detailed statement of his objections to emigration :

Were I not writing to Mr. Holcroft, I should think it needful to apologize for my abrupt self-introduction to you in London, and the liberty I now take in addressing you; but I trust you will not deem me impertinent, nor expect any professions to convince you of the esteem and admiration I have for your character. These sentiments induced me to visit you in your late unjust confinement, to be anxious for your safety, and sincerely to rejoice that you are now restored to your friends, and your extensive circle of usefulness. You may perhaps recollect the scheme of which I gave you an imperfect outline; I much desire your opinion and advice on the subject; but your mind being then much engaged on its peculiar situation, I forebore to intrude the subject. Hoping you may now be happily settled at your rightful home, and believing you would be happy to assist me by

⁴ *Wat Tyler* was not published until twenty-three years afterwards, when this ghost of his republican past rose to embarrass the author, who had by this time, as Hazlitt remarked, "missed his way in Utopia to find it in Old Sarum."

advice as well as enforce by precept any virtuous intention, I would engage your thoughts to our projected plan of establishing a genuine system of property. America presents many advantages to the accomplishment of this scheme—the easy rate at which land may be purchased is not the least important: yet we are not determined on emigration. Principle, not plan, is our object. A friend has suggested that the plan is practicable in some of the uncultivated parts of Wales. I recollect your expressing a desire that we might form such a society without leaving the kingdom. As we wish to consult all who may render our efforts more serviceable to the cause of truth and virtue, we should be happy if in some unemployed hour you would consider the subject and impart to us any objection which may occur peculiar to the scheme of emigration. From the writings of William Godwin and yourself, our minds have been illuminated; we wish our actions to be guided by the same superior abilities; perhaps when together you may bestow some thoughts to our advantage. To him and your friend Nicholson, I would request the remembrance of an admirer. Long may they continue to instruct and amend mankind. If we could practice our scheme in this kingdom, it would save much expense, perhaps danger, and at the same time be more agreeable to our private inclinations; but the probability of being obnoxious to Government and subject to tythes, are [sic] in our opinions serious objections[sic].⁵

Whether Holcroft consulted Godwin or elaborated upon his advice to Lovell we do not know. But Coleridge, who was soon exasperated by the proposal to give up the

⁵ *Memoirs of Thomas Holcroft*, ed. William Hazlitt, in *Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, Centenary edition (London, 1930), III, 278-9.

idea of emigration, wrote Southey from Cambridge December 17 that neither Holcroft, whom he had just met, nor Lovell understood "our system." And about the same time he was taunting Southey himself over his hesitation concerning America.⁶

(Among the other prospective joiners whom Lovell canvassed was Joseph Cottle, the enterprising youth publisher of Bristol.) Cottle has left us an engaging picture of the young enthusiast in his *Early Recollections*:

At the close of the year 1794, a clever young Quaker, of the name of Robert Lovell, who had married a Miss Fricker, informed me that a few friends of his from Oxford and Cambridge, with himself, were about to sail to America, and on the banks of the Susquehannah to form a "Social Colony," in which there was to be a community of property and where all that was selfish was to be proscribed. None, he said, were to be admitted into their numbers but tried and incorruptible characters; and he felt quite assured that he and his friends would be able to realize a state of society free from the evils and turmoils that then agitated the world, and present an example of the eminence to which men might arrive under the unrestrained influence of right principles. He now paid me the compliment of saying that that he would be happy to include *me* in this select assemblage, who, under a state which he called Pantisocracy, were, he hoped, to regenerate the whole complexion of society and that, not by establishing formal laws, but by excluding all the little deteriorating passions: in-

⁶ See letter of December, 1794, *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Boston, 1895), I, 121-2.

justice, "wrath, anger, clamour and evil-speaking," and thereby setting an example of "Human Perfectibility."⁷

Cottle was momentarily carried away from his intellectual moorings by this onrush of the passion of benevolence, but when he regained his composure he put a few plain questions :

"How do you go?" said I. My young and ardent Quaker friend instantly replied, "We freight a ship, carrying out with us ploughs and all other implements of husbandry". . . "But," said I, "to freight a ship and sail out in the high style of gentlemen agriculturists, will require funds. How do you manage this?" "We all contribute what we can," said he, "and I shall introduce all my dear friends to you immediately upon their arrival in Bristol."

Cottle warmed to the genial and sanguine youth and listened to poems of Coleridge and Southey which Lovell read to him.

A short while afterwards Lovell introduced Southey to Cottle and later he introduced Coleridge upon his long delayed arrival from London in January. Burnett about this time, it appears, came up from Somersetshire. Coleridge and he had found Bristol a very pleasant place, and so in February they settled down with Southey for three months at 48 College Street to spend their days and nights, amid clouds of tobacco smoke, in contemplation of the blessings of Pantisocracy, not making even the least practical preparation for the voyage. Lovell, we may safely assume, attended them from his home near by. Across the midst of forty-three years Cottle smiles at the

⁷ *Early Recollections, chiefly relating to the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London, 1837), I, 2-4.

youthful ardour of Lovell, who had been practical enough at least to figure out a daily routine:

Robert Lovell stated, with great seriousness, that, after the minutest calculation and inquiry among practical men, the demand on their labour would not exceed two hours a day; that is, for the production of absolute necessities. The leisure still remaining, he said, might be devoted in convenient fractions to the extension of their domain by prostrating the sturdy trees of the forest where "lop and top" without cost would supply their cheerful winter fire; and the trunks when cut out into planks, without any other expense than their pleasant labour, would form the sties for their pigs, and the linnies for their cattle, and the barns for their produce; reserving the choicest timbers for their own comfortable log-dwellings. But after every claim that might be made on their manual labour had been discharged, a large portion of time, he said, would still remain for their own individual pursuits so that they might read, converse, and even write books.⁸

Meanwhile in the autumn had been published at Bath *Poems by Robert Lovell and Robert Southey*⁹ (dated on

8 *Ibid.*, I, 8-9.

9 Thomas Park, in his edition of the *Poetical Works of Robert Lovell* (1808), writes, with what authority I do not know, that this volume was published while Lovell was a student at Balliol College, Oxford, in 1795. Neither Cottle nor Southey speaks of his being at Oxford then or at any other time. Cottle gives the impression that Lovell attended the sessions of Pantisocratic talk at 48 College Street. Moreover, Lovell was married and nearly twenty-five years of age at the time. It may be that the manner in which their names were set down on the title page of their *Poems* accounts for the impression that Lovell wrote at Oxford: "By Robert Lovell, and Robert Southey, Balliol College, Oxford."

the title page 1795), Lovell signing himself Moschus and Southey, Bion. Of Lovell's talents as displayed in this little volume Coleridge did not have a very high opinion. The volume is remarkable for its variety of verse form and subject-matter. Lovell's contributions show a distinct preference for elegiac quatrains after the manner of Gray's *Elegy*. His poetry lacks simplicity, as Coleridge observes, but *Lyrical Ballads* had not come yet. The sonnet on Stonehenge,¹⁰ supposed to be chanted by the ghost of a Druid standing on the ancient pile, Coleridge thought "sublime and truly original." Another sonnet alludes to outrages committed in the name of patriotism and to the panic in England over the diffusion of French revolutionary principles. The longest of his poems is a satire, "Bristol," dated 1794. From our point of view it is interesting as reflecting the apathy and coldness which the heated visions of the Pantisocrats met among the hard-headed burghers of his native town, "by trade and dullness consecrate to fame." In the dedication "to the liberal and literary people of Bristol," the author tells us that the poem is descriptive of the illiberal and illiterate. The devotion to wealth at the expense of the things of the mind and spirit especially arouses his indignation:

Here worth is prized, if worth will aught obtain,
And truth is judged by rules of loss and gain;

¹⁰ The references are to the *Poetical Works of Robert Lovell*, edited by Thomas Park, F.S.A. (1808), vol. 73 of the *British Poets* (Chiswick, 1822). Both these sonnets were published in Coleridge's *Watchman* for April 2, 1796. Southey tried, it seems, unsuccessfully in 1796 to find a publisher for a volume of Lovell's poems with the idea of buying at least a harpsichord for the widow. Some of them were published posthumously in the *Annual Anthology* for 1799.

The love of virtue's lost in love of pence,
And mean low cunning holds the place of sense . . .
If o'er some mind bright Genius shed her ray,
No friendly fosterer brings it forth to day.¹¹

But the Pantisocrats had not yet tapped the philanthropy of Joseph Cottle.

Of Lovell's other activities in 1795 we know little. In the gradual estrangement that grew up between Southey and Coleridge over the conduct of the Pantisocratic scheme, Lovell was drawn more toward the common-sense point of view with Southey. Coleridge and Burnett, on the other hand, less matter-of-fact in their aspirations, persisted in thinking of Pantisocracy as containing in germ the complete regeneration of society. Lovell had grown impatient with Coleridge's indolence while he was dillydallying in London in late 1794. He counselled delay in Coleridge's marriage with Sarah Fricker, apparently to await further proofs of his reliability, and by his prudence manœuvred himself into a quarrel with his more impulsive brother. Coleridge had definitely engaged himself to Sarah in the fall at the insistence of Southey, and she herself had been won largely by the romantic picture he had drawn of a new and better society. No wonder that between the counsels of his two prospective brothers-in-law and his own inclinations, Coleridge was distracted. While Coleridge and Southey were giving their lectures in Bristol in the spring and summer of 1795 to raise money for their enterprise, what Lovell was doing is not clear. We do know that he detested equally with Coleridge and Southey the war policy of Pitt against

¹¹ *Poetical Works*, pp. 18-19.

which they were raging on the platform, and that he sympathized with the martyrs of liberty. But when Southey sailed for Lisbon in November, Lovell undoubtedly saw as clearly as he the unwisdom of the Pantisocratic adventure. Unfortunately, however, the branch that might have grown full straight was cut, for a few weeks before Southey's return to England in May 1796 his friend died of a fever caught on a trip to Salisbury. He was only twenty-six years old.

George Burnett was more nearly the spiritual brother of Coleridge in the days of Pantisocratic fervour than was either Southey or Lovell.¹ In his improvidence, his impulsiveness, his affectionate nature, his weakness of will, and the desultory character of his loyalty to a task, he had much in common with "the sublime somnambulist." Like Coleridge, he sought refuge from ill health and ill fortune in opium, but he never reclaimed his better self, and, since he was a man of talent rather than a man of genius, the residue of his powers after this spiritual devastation was so small as to make his life a more dismal anticlimax than Coleridge's. That his life was blasted with the ecstasy of Pantisocracy was the general belief of his friends. "Poor George Burnett!" became their stock lamentation upon the mention of his name.

The son of well-to-do Somersetshire squire, he went up to Balliol College, Oxford in March 1793, carrying a letter of introduction from Thomas Poole to his cousin John. His father had given him his portion to spend on a university education in preparation for the Established Church. At Oxford he chose the company of intellectuals with whom his endowments perhaps ill fitted him to keep pace. Southey, who had entered the college in January,

was the leading member of this "sober society" of young men who spent their time "alternately studying and philosophizing, railing at collegiate folly, and enjoying rational society."¹² At the same time, caught in the moral convulsion that had followed the French Revolution in England, Burnett was led through the adoption of radical ideas about society and government to a disgust with university life—a disgust which made him a very willing disciple of any Utopian scheme.¹³

Into this "sober society" in June 1794 came Samuel Taylor Coleridge. En route with J. Hucks from Cambridge to Wales for a pedestrian tour, he had stopped at Oxford for a visit with his old schoolmate Robert Allen, a member of the society and friend of Southey. I quote Southey's succinct account of the origin of Pantisocracy given to Cottle long afterward:

Allen introduced them to me and the scheme was talked of, but by no means determined on. It was talked into shape by Burnett and myself, when upon the commencement of the long vacation, we separated from them, they making for Gloucester, he and I proceeding in foot to Bath. After some weeks S. T. C. returning from his tour, came to Bristol on his way and slept there. Then it was that we resolved upon going to America, and S. T. C. and I walked into Somersetshire to see Burnett, and on that journey it was that he first saw Poole.¹⁴

¹² *Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, I, 203. They sometimes joined, however, in less serious pursuits: "The fiddle with one string is gone," Southey once writes, "and its place is supplied with a harpsichord in Burnett's room. Lightfoot still melodizes on the flute, and, had I but a Jew's harp, the concert would be complete."

¹³ Quoted from James Dykes Campbell's narrative of Coleridge's life, used as the introduction to the Globe edition of the *Poetical*

As to who were the real begetters of Pantisocracy, we then have the word of Southey that it was "talked into shape" during the three weeks' visit of Coleridge at Oxford by Burnett and himself.¹⁴ In a letter of October 19, 1794, Southey wrote to Thomas Southey: "My aunt abuses poor Lovell most unmercifully and attributes the whole scheme to him; . . . it was concerted between Burnett and me."¹⁵ Haller concludes that Southey "supplied the initial force" and that, since he introduced Coleridge to Godwin, he must have contributed some of the constructive ideas.¹⁶ He also thinks that it is unlikely that Burnett contributed "anything but sympathy and agreement," since "he was an unsteady soul blown about by gusts of mistaken pride and back-boneless vanity."¹⁷ But so to some extent was Coleridge. And Haller's opinion hardly comports with Southey's own statement about their intellectual partnership. Moreover, Pantisocracy seems to have been the only project to which Burnett's devotion was steady for any length of time. To quote Cottle, who had a chance to know, "his was a subordinate part to act in the new drama, and not the less valuable for its wanting splendour."¹⁸

Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, p. xxi. As Campbell points out, Cottle had printed the letter inaccurately.

¹⁴ *Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, I, 223.

¹⁵ *Early Life of Robert Southey, 1774-1803* (New York, 1917), pp. 128-129. See also Southey's letter of November 13, 1793 to H. C. Bedford and his letter of December 14, 1793, to Grosvenor C. Bedford, *Life and Correspondence*, I, 192-3, 196.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

¹⁷ *Early Recollections*, I, 7.

Burnett's home was at Huntspill about seven miles from Poole's at Stowey. We have already noted Poole's interest in the young man. Thus Burnett became the instrument by whom Coleridge was made acquainted with his philanthropic friend. The three young men seem to have stirred up the Somersetshire countryside by their "irresponsible" talk. Coleridge, especially, who had just been touring Wales in the white heat of inspiration, preaching aspheterism, Pantisocracy, and anti-militarism, seemed to have shocked the innocent neighbors as he rose up "terrible in reasoning" against the ills of an order with which they were blissfully and simply satisfied. A few years later Coleridge wrote to his friend Wade from Stowey of an amusing occurrence which concerned Burnett during one of his walking tours into Somersetshire:

I am here after a most tiresome journey, in the course of which a woman asked me if I knew one Coleridge of Bristol. I answered I had heard of him. "Do you know," quoth she, "that that vile Jacobin villain drew away a young man of our parish, one Burnett, etc.?" and in this strain did the woman continue for near an hour, heaping on me every name of abuse that the parish of Billingsgate could supply. I listened very particularly; appeared to approve all she said, exclaiming, "dear me!" two or three times, and, in fine, so completely won the woman's heart by my civilities that I had not courage enough to undeceive her.¹⁸

It was soon evident that Coleridge was engaging much of the affection which Burnett formerly paid to Southeby.

18 *Ibid.*, I, 140. The letter is undated. Cottle says that it was written "a little before" another letter which Coleridge wrote from Stowey in 1797.

In August he seems to have accompanied Coleridge and Southey back to Bristol. At any rate no sooner had Coleridge got himself engaged to Sarah Fricker than George proposed marriage to the fourth sister, Martha. But his suit was spurned in spite of the claims of an attractive personality.¹⁹ Meantime 'Southey's canvassing for recruits went on apace, so that by September 20 he thought he had twenty-seven persons engaged! Burnett does not appear for a while to have been very active. Perhaps he needed the stimulus of Coleridge's presence. But soon after Coleridge and Southey had taken the room at 48 College Street, Bristol, in February, Burnett joined them with the full privileges of bed and board and helped them fritter their time away in high talk about their plans for the destiny of the human race. Soon the large company of settlers in prospect a few months before had dwindled to the original four. Burnett and Lovell could at first have provided their portion of the common capital, but Coleridge and Southey, upon whom the responsibility for leading rested, had nothing. However, when they applied to Cottle—much to his own relief, since he had feared that they would foolishly commit themselves to the undertaking on the first ship they could find leaving for America—for help in paying a seven-weeks' lodging bill,

19 Cottle (*ibid.*, I, 7) noted that "his manners were unpresuming and honesty was depicted on his countenance." Dr. John Aikin, who as the editor of the *Monthly Magazine*, had been introduced to Burnett in 1800 in London, remembered pleasantly "the elegant person, the dignified manners, and the perspicacious mind of this amiable and accomplished young man." (*Monthly Magazine*, XLII, 313.) Coleridge's daughter (*Memoirs and Letters of Sara Coleridge*, p. 39) wrote: "Burnett offered marriage to my Aunt Martha during the agitation of the Pantisocracy scheme. She refused him scornfully, seeing that he only wanted a *wife in a hurry* not her individually of all the world."

Burnett's arrears were greater than the others'. He had no lecture returns to augment his allowance, which itself had been dwindling, it appears, with the patience of his father, who had originally been sympathetic. "Their relations," writes James Dykes Campbell, "seem to have been Pantisocratic, for Southey declared, two years later, that his earnings during the early half of 1795 were as four to one of Coleridge's, and that, besides supporting himself, he almost supported Coleridge."²⁰ Burnett, still relying upon his family, seems not to have entered into such a financial arrangement. Meanwhile Southey, whose common-sense was the first to revive and who had already suggested apparently with Lovell's acquiescence, that they should retire for a time into Wales, had allowed his enthusiasm to weaken visibly, and his defection became all the clearer to Coleridge during their lecture period. Burnett joined Coleridge in condemning "the system of prudentials and apostasy" which "sloped the descent from virtue." In a long letter²¹ of November 13, 1795, written on the eve of Southey's wedding and of his sailing for Portugal, Coleridge traces the stages of Southey's desertion and tells him just what he thinks of it. The letter is indignant, brutally frank, and highly charged with Coleridge's explosive temperament; he accuses Southey of apostasy, selfishness in little things, and insincerity. But it is also poignant with the pain of wounded friendship, as only Coleridge could make it.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. xxv.

²¹ *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, I, 137-151. This letter does not support the opinion of a recent writer that Burnett was "soon . . . abandoning the original scheme entirely." (J. R. MacGillivray, "The Pantisocracy Scheme and its Immediate Background," *Studies in English by Members of University College*, Toronto, 1931.)

And he makes clear that he speaks for both himself and Burnett. Burnett agrees with him in reproaching Southey for insisting that in the Wales project his private resources were to continue his individual property and that only the land was to be held jointly. Burnett joins him in declaring that Southey "had given up every principle" and "ascribes your conduct to an unparticipating propensity—to a total want of the boasted *flocci-naucini-hili-pilificating* sense." Would that Southey had learned from Burnett "how infinitely more to be valued is integrity of heart than effulgence of intellect!"

/But Southey had not only deserted his principles; he had, in Coleridge's opinion, wronged Burnett irretrievably. Burnett "gave his all for Pantisocracy and expected that Pantisocracy would be at least bread and cheese to him." ! The "principles" which he had imbibed from Southey unfitted him for any sincere service either in the church or in that "wicked profession," the law. Though Coleridge is here attempting to shift his own part of the responsibility for Burnett's indoctrination, his fears were to be fully realized. Burnett had embarked not only his worldly prospects but his very soul upon the ill-fated scheme. So when his visions had melted into airy nothingness, he had nothing of solid prospect to which he might anchor. He had no gift for poetry like Coleridge, Southey, and Lovell. Of course his principles would not permit him to return to the university to finish his preparations for the priesthood of the Establishment, though he was urged to do so by those who still thought he might be retrieved. Thus he became a burden to his friends.

For a while Coleridge did all he could to get him on his feet. During his short stay at Clevedon, after his marriage with Sarah in October 1795, he hospitably shared his rose-bound cottage for a time with George.²² While Southey was on his way to Lisbon, Coleridge and Burnett with other friends at Bristol, where they had removed in order to be near a library, planned the *Watchman*. Coleridge called it in the prospectus "a Review, Newspaper and Annual Register"; it was to be issued every eight days and to deal with political literature, criticism, poetry, and essays. In early January Coleridge, evidently leaving Sarah in the care of Burnett at Bristol,²³ started on a tour of the northern counties to secure subscriptions, preaching in most of the large towns and making the acquaintance of Charles Lloyd. He returned in high spirits with a subscription list of almost a thousand names. The first number was issued according to schedule March 1, 1796, but its dullness made it rather disappointing. The most bothersome part of it was the debates, which had to be abridged and were difficult to make interesting, especially since other papers had usually

²² Coleridge tells in his *Commonplace Book* (quoted in James Dykes Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. xxvii) how he and Burnett rose at six, put on the kettle, and cleaned the shoes in preparation for the day.

²³ In a letter, dated January, 1796, to Cottle, Coleridge asks that Burnett be directed to help in the preparation of certain poems for the press. (*Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Earl Leslie Griggs, London, 1932, I, 35). In another letter on the same subject, dated 1796, he wrote Cottle that on a certain Saturday evening Mrs. Coleridge's spirits would not permit his being with his publisher, "George Burnett being absent." (*Ibid.*, I, 36.) Presumably these letters were written before January 10, the date of Coleridge's first letter to Wade describing his northern journey.

printed them in full before the *Watchman* came out. Burnett was given the work of abridgment, but he did it, wrote Coleridge to Cottle, "in such a careless, slovenly manner that I was obliged to throw them into the fire and am now doing them myself."²⁴ The paper expired with the tenth number May 13 on account of its failure to pay expenses.²⁵ It was a wagon hitched to two errant stars. Meantime George had imposed upon Coleridge an obligation of support which he could ill meet. In a letter of March 20 to the Rev. T. Edwards about his concern over the financial success of the *Watchman*, Coleridge sighed: "My wife, my wife's Mother and little Brother, and George Burnett—five mouths opening and shutting as I pull the string!"²⁶ Coleridge had failed in his first test as a breadwinner.

But the ever-helpful Poole softened his fall by sending him a purse of forty pounds, received the day of the paper's suspension, and by fulfilling his request for "a horse of tolerable meekness" to ride over to Stowey for a

²⁴ Letter of April, 1796, *Early Recollections*, I, 157.

²⁵ In the last number of the *Watchman* Coleridge remarks that for most of his readers the weekly events were more satisfactorily summarized in Benjamin Flower's *Cambridge Intelligencer*, "a Newspaper, the style and composition of which would claim distinguished praise, even among the productions of *literary leisure*, while it breathes everywhere the severest morality, fighting fearlessly the good fight against tyranny, but never unfaithful to that Religion whose service is perfect Freedom" (p. 324). Walter Graham (*English Literary Periodicals*, New York, 1930, p. 189) overemphasizes the influence of the *Watchman* as a radical paper and ignores the importance of the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, which, as the leading provincial organ of the radicals, had been fighting Pitt's government and the Established Church since 1793.

²⁶ *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, I, 48.

fortnight's visit. Burnett probably followed him into Somersetshire and there stayed with his relatives during the summer and fall, while Coleridge, eaten up with anxiety, was vainly clutching at various prospects of a livelihood. After his final settling at Stowey on the last day of the year, George Burnett was his first visitor and a very frequent one. In fact, it appears that he divided his residence between Huntspill and Stowey, in spite of the extremely limited accommodations of the cottage for a family of four.²⁷ Very likely, however, by the middle 1797 George was becoming a nettle in the side of his friend. Besides, Wordsworth, then only twenty miles away at Racedown, had by June left little room in Coleridge's heart for the less worthy.

We next hear of Burnett's entering, very probably upon Coleridge's recommendation, a dissenting college at Manchester, where his religious scruples were respected. For a short while in 1798 he was pastor of a Unitarian congregation at Yarmouth. Here in May Southey came to see his young brother Henry, whom he had placed under Burnett's tuition, and the two erstwhile Pantisocrats seemed to be reconciled. It was on this visit that through

27 In the spring of 1797 Coleridge was suddenly called home from Bristol, where he had gone to arrange with Cottle for the publication of the joint volume of his, Lamb's, and Lloyd's poetry, in order to attend Burnett, "very ill with jaundice." (Cottle, *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey* (London, 1847), p. 141). In a letter later from Stowey to Cottle he tells about Burnett's buying brandy from a smuggler which gave him (Coleridge) "Brandiphobia" and concludes: "I wish my pockets were as yellow as George's phiz." (*Early Recollections*, I, 248). For a time, too, Charles Lloyd, who had accompanied Coleridge from Bristol, made his home with them. Soon he was attacked by fits, precursors of his later madness, and alarmed his hosts even more than Burnett had.

Burnett Southey was made acquainted with William Taylor of Norwich.

But Burnett's lack of moral stamina soon became painfully evident. He relinquished the ministry and threw himself again upon the charity of his friends. In a letter²⁸ to Southey early in 1800 Coleridge suggests that he might be employed to do under Southey's instruction a four hundred page history of poetry to be issued under Southey's name to make it saleable. But nothing came of the suggestion. They did succeed, however, in obtaining for him the position of tutor to two sons of Lord Stanhope. But before taking up his duties he wasted a month or more in the country. The young men, however, would not submit to the educational regimen of their father and they left home soon after Burnett assumed his position. Lord Stanhope generously paid him two hundred pounds, the sum at which he had been engaged for one year. His restlessness drove him to Edinburgh to study medicine for a short period; the only upshot of this training was an equally short period as an assistant surgeon in a regiment of militia. In a letter to Poole in December 1803, asking for a loan to meet the expenses of his equipment, he says that he feels that the situation will arouse him from "the joyless torpor" into which he has "long been sunk." "The enchantment of Pantisocracy," he continues, "threw a gorgeous light over the objects of life; but it soon disappeared, and has left *me* in the darkness of ruin."²⁹ In a letter of 1804 he

²⁸ Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, I, 325.

²⁹ Mrs. Henry Sandford, *Thomas Poole and His Friends* (London, 1888), II, 133.

writes to Poole again: "It is now five years since all enjoyment of life that deserves the name of enjoyment has to *me* been annihilated."³⁰ The desire of his literary friends to help him was hampered by his impatience, his jealousy, and his fickleness of purpose. Southey told Cottle that in 1802 "he became deranged on one point, which was that of *hatred to me*, whom he accused of having jealously endeavoured to suppress his talents."³¹ He was galled by the consciousness that he was a disappointment to his friends.

Meanwhile, this inner degeneration was hastened by his taking to opium. Coleridge, with rather poor grace for one who should have been prepared by his own experience to sympathize with one in such an unfortunate condition, wrote heartlessly to Southey January 8, 1803:

Your whole conduct to George Burnett has been that of a kind and truly good man. For myself I have no heart to spare for a coxcomb mad with vanity and stupefied with opium. He may not have a bad heart; but he wants a good one. With much sorrow from without, much pain and disease, and not a little self-dissatisfaction, and with some real distresses of valuable men in my immediate view, I verily can scarcely afford even to pity a fool. Yet better stars be with him! I grieve sincerely that there should be such helpless self-tormentors; though I cannot say that it adds much to my grief, that one of them is called George Burnett. At least if it does it is for his friends' and not for his own sake.³²

³⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 135-136.

³¹ *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey*, p. 301.

³² *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, I, 240.

By the next year his bitterness had characteristically turned to pity. On February 20, 1804, he wrote to Southey from London:

I met G. Burnett the day before yesterday in Lincoln's Inn Fields, so nervous, so helpless, with such opium-stupidly-wild eyes. Oh, it made the place one calls the heart-ache.³³

Southey records in a letter to Cottle after Burnett's death how his own conscience had been satisfied:

The scheme of Pantisocracy proved his ruin; but he was twice placed in situations where he was well provided for. I had the greatest regard for him, and would have done, and indeed, as far as was in my power, did my utmost to serve him.³⁴

³³ *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, II, 467.

³⁴ *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey*, p. 301. Southey could point to several other instances of his sympathy and helpfulness. He joined Charles and Mary Lamb, who seems to have been quite interested in Burnett, in rebuking John Rickman for writing so harshly to George about his failures. (See letter of November 27, 1801, *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. J. W. Warner). In 1806 he "promised to give poor Burnett a helping hand" in the preparation of a book, perhaps his *Specimens of English Prose Writers*. (See *ibid.*, I, 365). In 1807 he had Burnett revise his *Palmerin* for the printer. But that there was a residue of self-dis-satisfaction over the treatment of Burnett can be read between the lines of a letter of May 13, 1809 to Miss Barker on the final débâcle of Burnett's moral powers: "Never was a good heart so woefully corrupted by a vain head. It grieves me to think how differently this intelligence affects me from what it could once have done. I think there was a time when that man's heart was as pure and innocent as the heart of man could be. That so beautiful a flower should have had its fruit so cankered! The question whether it would have been other-wise if he had never known me will occur to many persons. On that score I have nothing to repent." (*Ibid.*, II, 138.) His own son

The second situation provided him was an English tutorship in the family of a Count Zamoyska in Poland. He returned to England in less than a year and published his *Account of Poland* in 1807. His later writings were all book-sellers' projects. In the desperate year of 1802 he wrote the "Preliminary View" of Mavor's *Universal History* (1802-4). This historical survey culminates in the French Revolution, the purposes of which still shine to him through the murk of the rabble's tyranny:

The laws of its establishment, like those of Draco of old, have indeed been written in blood. Yet the means, rather than the end, are to be marked with reprobation. To behold a great and enlightened people, enslaved by the gross and withering superstitions of popery and by the no less powerful oppression of a civil despotism, resolving to break their chains and to breathe the air of freedom must create in every generous breast the emotions of sympathy and concern. . . . The horrors which have disgraced the cause of the French . . . are inseparable from all great revolutions in which is made an appeal to the dregs of the people. But let us hope that the picture will now be changed.³⁵

George Burnett had lost hope for himself but not for mankind. His other productions³⁶ are made up largely of

later remarked on the matter: "It [Burnett's fate] was . . . through life a subject of regret to my father, not unmixed with self-reproach." (*Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, I, 33.)

35 *Universal History*, II, 109-110.

36 His *Specimens of English Prose Writers* (3 vols., 1807), including considerable biographical and critical writing, was well received. During 1808 and 1809 at Huntspill he compiled his *Extracts from the Prose Works of Milton* and dedicated it to Lord Erskine.

biographical and critical sketches which accompany compilations made from earlier English prose.

In November, 1809, he left Huntspill and practically dropped out of sight for over a year.³⁷ He died in February, 1811, in the almshouse at Marylebone, where, driven by want and perhaps by dissipation, he had taken refuge. Thus "the wreck of Pantisocracy," his spirit broken by the buffets of the world, went down at last. Perhaps, in view of his inability to regain his equilibrium, Coleridge and Southey lived to regret that they had ever disturbed it.

³⁷ Southey, it appears, had some unpleasant contact with him, since he remarks to Cottle (*Reminiscences*, p. 301) that Burnett's hatred for him "returned in the last year of his life."

CHAPTER VI

JAMES MACKINTOSH, THE REVOLUTIONARY PHASE

THE fame of Sir James Mackintosh has been based more upon the solidity of his learning than upon the liberality of his ideas, which has been too much eclipsed by the conservatism into which he hardened, for a time at least, at the end of the century.¹

His mind was early subjected to the force of liberal opinion. In the winter of 1781-82 at Aberdeen University, he fell under the influence of the independent-minded Dr. Dunbar, an active opponent of the American war. Here the Dissenter, Robert Hall, was his closest and most admired friend. With him a debating society, called The Hall and Mackintosh Club, was formed, "the members of which to a man . . . lived and died," so Mackintosh's son and biographer wrote, "the zealous supporters of what are called liberal principles."¹ At the University of Edinburgh, where in 1784 he had gone to attend lectures in medicine, he delivered his first speech in the Speculative Society against the slave trade. Here he came to know Adam Smith, Thomas Beddoes, and Sayers, of Norwich. His preference for metaphysics and political philosophy over medical science soon asserted itself. His father had been too poor to send him to the Scottish bar as the son had wished.

¹ Robert James Mackintosh, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir James Mackintosh* (London, 1835), I, 16.

In 1788 came his introduction into liberal politics. In the spring he came up to London, ostensibly to practice medicine.¹ A young enthusiast for public happiness,² he soon was drawn into the ferment of the public mind and an intellectual atmosphere where all kinds of vague but generous dreams of human happiness were afloat.³ Debating societies, made up of youths planning to study law, attracted him, and his intellectual interests became predominantly political. He soon joined the Society for Constitutional Information, in which he formed a close friendship with Richard Sharp. In June 1789 he enthusiastically supported the liberal cause in the Westminster election, "parading the streets with Horne Tooke's colors in his hat."⁴ In the following autumn he went to Brussels, where he stayed for some time as correspondent for the *Oracle*. His biographer in *Public Characters* for 1808, writes:

Even anterior to the publication of *Vindiciae Gallicae* the fervour of this patriotism and the ardour of his sentiments . . . had endeared him to the late Mr. Brand-Hollis, whose library and whose table were alike open to him; in the former of which he found he was indebted to the words of Milton, Sidney and Locke, while at the latter in conjunction with men of nearly one *political faith*, he was enabled to contemplate every possible shade of religious belief in the persons . . . of Dr. Towers, Mr. Godwin, Mr. Gilbert Wakefield, and, if we are not misinformed, Mr. Thomas Paine.

² *Ibid.*, I, 41.

³ *Ibid.*, I, 52.

Back in London, he was soon again in the flux of the radical philosophy. In the summer of 1790 he retired to a village near London apart from the ferment of political feeling. The *Reflections* a little later appeared to check the current of liberal opinion in favor of the French Revolution, which had up to that time run unimpeded. Paine lost no time in challenging the defender of established institutions on behalf of the lower and middle classes. But his coarseness repelled many of the admirers of the Revolution among the cultured upper middle class and the nobility. Mackintosh came forward as their spokesman with his *Vindiciae Gallicae* in April 1791.

During its composition he had been living in great intimacy with Thomas Christie, who was at the same time busy with his own reply to Burke. It appears, too, that he had talked about his work with Paine. "Tell your friend Mackintosh," Paine one day jocularly remarked to Christie, "that if he does not make haste my work against Burke will be published, after which nothing more on that subject need be said."⁴ Mackintosh did not have Paine's consummate cleverness and headlong courage, but he had a deeper substratum of philosophy and a greater urbanity of style, which brought the learned into assent. For the bold, bald common sense and brutal outspokenness of Paine he substituted a calm philosophy and a suave softspokenness which turned men's convictions without too great a wrench to their prepossessions.

The *Vindiciae Gallicae* has nothing of the coarse hatred for Burke displayed by Paine. He shows a chivalrous respect for his adversary's powers and never attempts to associate impurity of motive with falsity of principle. In

⁴ *Public Characters*, 1808, 225-226.

a splendid rhetorical dash he warns his readers that Burke's strength of mind and beauty and power of discourse may mask from them the weakness of his cause and his lack of method and organization:

He can escape from an untenable position into a brilliant declamation . . . He can cover the most ignominious retreat by a brilliant allusion. He can sap the most impregnable position by pathos and put to flight a host of syllogisms with a sneer.^{4a}

Only once when he, like Paine, charges Burke with misplacing his sympathies does he fall into an intemperance of expression suggestive of the *Rights of Man*:

His eloquence is not at leisure to deplore the fate of beggared artisans and famished peasants, the victims of suspended industry and languishing commerce. The sensibility which seems scared by the homely miseries of the vulgar is attracted only by the splendid sorrows of royalty and agonizes at the slenderest pang that assails the heart of sottishness and prostitution, if they are placed by fortune on a throne.⁵

Mackintosh's refutation is developed under the following heads: I. The general expediency and necessity of a revolution in France. II. The composition and character of the National Assembly. III. The popular excesses which attended or followed the Revolution. IV. The new constitution of France. V. The conduct of its English admirers.

^{4a} *Vindiciae Gallicae*, p. vii. The quotations are taken from the third edition, 1791.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

Section I is largely historical and requires little attention here. He concludes it with the statement "that in the French Revolution all is to be attributed to general causes influencing the whole body of the people and almost nothing to the schemes of individuals."⁶

It is useless to demand, as Burke has done, a legal instrument in such a shift as that from the National Assembly to the National Convention.

Great revolutions are too immense for technical formality. All the sanction that can be hoped for in such events is the voice of the people, however informally or irregularly expressed.

A government is made legitimate by the approbation of its citizens. We may say just as truly of the English government of 1688 that they did not hold their authority under any constitutional law. The French Assembly was even legally elected; the English was not.

Whether the French should have reformed or destroyed their government depends upon whether the civil order was corrigible. The orders of old France—the nobility, the church, and the parliaments—were so combined in spirit with the ancient government that they were incapable of alliance with a free constitution. They would have "retained the seeds of reviving despotism in the bosom of freedom." The orders in England, Mr. Burke is asked to remember, had qualified themselves for partaking of an improved liberty more than those of France, where there was no remnant of a free constitution and

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59. The remaining references to quotations from the *Vindiciae Gallicae* are given in four groups, corresponding to the four remaining heads.

where the nobility and priesthood had degenerated into servitude to the crown.

Mackintosh makes an eloquent retort to Burke's famous description of nobility as "the Corinthian capital of polished states":

The august fabric of society is deformed and encumbered by such Gothic [sic] ornaments. The massy Doric that sustains it is labor, and the splendid variety of arts and talents that solace and embellish life, forms the decoration of its Corinthian and Ionic capitals.

When the legislature of France abolished titles they gave a death blow to the slavish prejudices that had kept the country unfit for freedom. The ancestors of the English did the same when they deviated in 1688 from the succession and destroyed the prejudice which had caused it to be regarded as sacred.

So much for the abolition of nobility; now for the fate of the church. The confiscation of the property of the French church had met with Burke's severest condemnation. The resumption of the ecclesiastical territorial revenues, the reorganization of the priesthood, and the dissolution of the priesthood as a governing body were looked upon by him as the result of "the union of robbery and irreligion to glut the rapacity of stock-jobbers and to gratify the hostility of atheists." He denies that the church lands were national property. Mackintosh's answer is that the priests are no more proprietors of the land from which they enjoy the revenue than other public servants are of the money from which their salaries are paid. But, though the state is the proprietor of the church, its faith is pledged to those who have

already entered the church for the continuance of those incomes for which they have abandoned all other pursuits. Mackintosh's spirit is as conciliatory as his logic is relentless.

The head and front of the church's offending was that it had come into a peculiarly servile relation to the crown:

There was no protection for the opulence and existence [corporate] of the European priesthood in an enlightened period but the throne. It found here the only bulwark against the inroads of reason; for the superstition which once formed their power was gone. Around the throne, therefore, they rallied. To the monarch they transferred the devotion which had formerly attached them to the church and the fierceness of priestly zeal was succeeded in their bosoms by the more peaceful sentiments of a polished and courtly servility.

It is not contended that individual nobles and clergy were bad citizens but that they were members of corporations which militated against public freedom.

True to the tenets of revolutionary radicalism, Mackintosh finds the source of at least one-third of human misery in oppressive and corrupt government. Besides, he is thoroughly devoted to the application of reason as the panacea for all the ills which government inflicts upon mankind: |

It was time that men should learn to tolerate nothing ancient that reason does not respect, and to shrink from no novelty to which reason may conduct . . . It was time . . . that legislators, instead of that narrow and dastardly coasting which never ventures to lose sight of usage and precedent, should, guided by the polarity of

reason, hazard a bolder investigation and discover in unexplored regions the treasure of public felicity.

The resort to reason by the French had nothing of the superficial or fortuitous about it. The National Assembly were able to avail themselves of a century's discussion of the principles of government; they were not themselves in the completest sense innovators:

They were fortunate enough to live in a world when it was only necessary to affix the stamp of law to what had been prepared by the research of philosophy.

There follows a masterly defense of the usefulness of abstract theory in politics.

Mackintosh, like Paine, believes in the essential simplicity of good government and has faith that the conclusions of political philosophy will eventually be thoroughly assimilated by the people.¹

The people may not be profound, but the truths which regulate the moral and political relations of man are at no great distance from the surface.

Even the sober Mackintosh indulges himself in a vision of the New Jerusalem, though it is somewhat more subdued than that of Condorcet or even than that of Godwin:

The diffusion of political knowledge has almost prepared a people to receive them [the truths of the philosophers], and good men are at length permitted to indulge the hope that the miseries of the human race are about to be alleviated . . . That hope may be illusive, for the grounds of its enemies are strong, the folly and villainy of man. Yet they who entertain it will feel no

shame in defeat and no envy of the triumphant prediction of their adversaries . . . They can never cease to rejoice that in the long catalogue of crimes that blackened human annals the year 1789 presents one spot on which the eye of humanity may with complacence dwell.⁷

The fact that the French Revolution was popular, that it was centered in the people rather than in personalities, accounts to a large extent for its excesses. There is more resentment to satiate and less authority to control it.

The attempt to punish the spirit that actuates a people, if it were just would be in vain, and if it were possible, would be cruel. They are too many to be punished in a view of justice, and too strong to be punished in a view of policy . . . No remedy is, therefore, left but the progress of instruction, the force of persuasion, and the mild authority of opinion. These remedies, though infallible, are of slow operation and in the interval which elapses before a calm succeeds the boisterous moments of revolution it is vain to expect a people inured to barbarism by their oppressors and which has ages of oppression to avenge, will be punctiliously generous in their triumphs, nicely discriminative in their vengeance, or cautiously mild in their mode of retaliation. "They will break their chains on the heads of their oppressors."

Thus Mackintosh condones the violence of the Revolution by the length and thoroughness of the oppression of the people and relies upon the power of education to restore them to sanity and self-control.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 71, 79, 101, 118, 123, 124-125.

He then enters upon a defense of the new system of manners succeeding that of the "age of chivalry," the passing of which Burke laments so deeply:

The manners of the middle ages were, in the most singular sense, compulsory. Enterprising benevolence was produced by general fierceness, gallant courtesy by ferocious rudeness; and artificial gentleness resisted the torrent of natural barbarism. But a less incongruous system has succeeded, in which commerce, which invites men's interests, and knowledge, which excludes those prejudices that tend to embroil them, present a broader basis for the stability of civilized and beneficent manners.⁸

Moreover, the death of chivalry will not, as Burke fears, bring fatal consequences to the development of literature. The energy of freedom should certainly be more conducive to literature than the favor of depotism.

In the discussion of the new constitution of France the author limits himself to the defense of the grand theoretic principle of the French system and its most important practical institutions.

Now, Burke had directed his criticism against the great principle of the revolutionists, that the assertion and protection of the natural rights of man is the object of all legitimate government. Burke accepts the social contract with far-reaching reservations; he declares that man surrenders all his natural rights upon entering into society and retains only the rights by the creation of which the contract holds society together. Though granting the existence of natural rights, he denies any appeal to natural

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-4, 199.

rights in the social state. Mackintosh opposes him with the revolutionary idea that there is a residue of natural rights not surrendered to society in the contract and that it is the obligation of society to preserve entire these rights which men enjoyed in the state of nature. In fact, the equality of right in a state of nature is an impotent theory and must be put into effect by society in not allowing natural rights to be violated by inequalities of strength or skill. Civilized law itself presupposes a residuum of natural rights; so its language is restrictive, not permissive.

The criminal code of all nations consists of prohibitions, and whatever is not prohibited by the law, men everywhere conceive themselves able to do with impunity. They act on the principle . . . that they retain rights which no power can impair or infringe, which are not the boon of society but the attribute of their nature.

Mackintosh is generous-minded enough to condemn unequivocally the exclusion of the King's ministers from seats in the Assembly and the disfranchising by the Assembly of every citizen who does not pay a direct contribution to the government. He also disapproves of territorial or financial representation as "a monstrous relic of ancient prejudice."

The contention that France could have assimilated the remains of her ancient constitution to the English is mainly invalidated by the fact that the nobles of England and France were quite different bodies:

In England they are a small body, united to the mass of the people by innumerable points of contact, receiving from it perpetual new infusions, and returning to it,

undistinguished and unprivileged, the majority of their children. In France they formed an immense insulated class, separated from society by every barrier that prejudice or policy could raise, receiving no plebeian accessions, and precluded, by the indelible character of nobility, the equal patrimony of all their children, from the possibility of their most remote descendants being restored to the general mass.

He concludes his discussion of the outworn system of orders in France by the declaration that there can be in civilized society but two great interests: the rich and the poor.¹ This is the theory of modern economic determinism. The power of reason, however, has been used too exclusively in defense of the higher levels of the social order.

It is thus that antiquity with her pretended political philosophy cannot boast one philosopher who questioned the justice of servitude, nor with all her pretended public virtue, one philanthropist who deplored the misery of slaves.⁹

The reorganizing of the French army as a citizen army instead of a standing organization is commended in consonance with opinions of the reformers in England. The professional army is hostile to freedom, since it is invested with the power of the state and at the same time removed from contact with public sentiment. The citizen soldiers, on the contrary, always entertain the same sentiment as the body of the nation, since they are the same. There is no horror, then, in the idea of an armed nation, as Burke seems to think.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 213, 255, 269.

In vindicating the English admirers of the French Revolution, he comes to the rescue of the Revolution and Constitutional Societies and their oracle Dr. Price, upon whom Burke had heaped so much contumely and invective. In this section the speciousness of Burke's argument is mercilessly exposed.¹

Dr. Price's famous statement that the English revolution of 1688 had established the right "to choose our own governors, to cashier them for misconduct, and to frame a government for ourselves" is vigorously defended. To Burke's charge that the first proposition is either false or nugatory, Mackintosh answers:

The people may certainly, as they have done, choose hereditary rather than elective monarchy. They may elect a race instead of an individual. Their right is in all these cases equally unimpaired.

The position of Dr. Price is not nugatory, for it gives honorable distinction to the English monarchy among the governments of the world. The title of William III clearly did not come by succession nor by conquest. The only other means is election.

To argue, as Burke does, against the second right stated by Dr. Price—"to cashier our governors for misconduct," that the deposition of one king does not furnish a precedent for the deposition of another is "one of the most arduous enterprises that ever the heroism of paradox encountered." But the precedent thus established is of a special kind. Mackintosh finds in the *Reflections* both an inconsistency in tracing precedents and a ridiculous slavery to them:

No man can deduce a precedent of law from the Revolution, for law cannot exist in the dissolution of government. A precedent of reason and justice only can be established . . . The Cokes, the Blackstones and Burkes speak as if our right to freedom depended on its possession by our ancestors. In the common case of morality, we would blush at such an absurdity. No man would justify murder by its antiquity or stigmatize benevolence for being new . . . It is not because we have been free but because we have a right to be free, that we ought to demand freedom.

Burke insists upon the Commons' solemn renunciation in 1688 of their right to change the monarch or the constitution. But this very statutory abolition, Mackintosh finds, is copied from a similar profession of eternal allegiance made by Queen Elizabeth's parliament. "The parliament of Elizabeth submit themselves and their posterity forever. The convention of 1688 spurn the submission for themselves but reenact it for posterity."¹⁰

He proceeds with strictures on the present parliament's lack of representative character.¹¹ Parliament is not the guardian of the people's rights nor the organ of their voice. To say that we are unequally represented implies unequal freedom, which is to use a contradiction in terms. It is the power of some and the slavery of others. Some of the evils a representative parliament would remedy are the increase of the national debt, the test acts, corruption of ministers, the silencing of the press, exclusion of Catholics, abridgment of trial by jury, and the proscription of manufacturing by excise. The removal of these evils will avert revolution, allow the government to reform with

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 295, 301, 303-5, 322.

dignity, and make unnecessary the humiliation of supplicating the very ones whom those in power despise. In contending for what the authors of the revolution of 1688 now would do, were they living, Mackintosh would look upon France, not as a model for English conduct so much a means of invigorating the English spirit of freedom. He closes with a hope for the rapid propagation from France of the principles of reason and freedom, the fear of which on the part of the courts of Europe he already sees evident.

The main effect of *Vindiciae Gallicae* upon the fortunes of the radical cause was to give it an intellectual solidity which made it proof against the sapping operations of the less scrupulous enemies of reform. Mackintosh had treated his subject with more lucidity and more restraint than Burke and strengthened liberal ideas among the thinking classes.¹¹ He had preferred to explain rather than to judge and had considered it useless to deal in either anathema or eulogy after he had demonstrated the necessary logical connections of events. For the mere revolutionary enthusiast *Vindiciae Gallicae* steadied the flame of liberty; to the reflecting and judicious it gave a more closely wrought armor of logic in which to meet the buffets of Burke's confederates. It showed them conclusively that not all the radical philosophy was the "offspring of cold hearts and muddy understandings."

11 Thomas Campbell, the poet, then in the full stream of revolutionary sympathy, wrote of the nature of Mackintosh's influence: "In the better educated classes of society, there was a general proneness to go with Burkett; and it is my since opinion, that that proneness would have become universal, if such a mind as Mackintosh's had not presented itself, like a breakwater, to the general tide of Burkism." Quoted in Mackintosh's *Memoirs*, I, 59.

Burke even praised its execution and referred to it as "the production of a scholar and a gentleman."¹² The Whigs, many of whom had been repelled by the inflammatory pronouncements of Paine, accepted much of its doctrine.¹³ Fox defended its merits in the House of Commons. The National Assembly made him a honorary citizen of France.

(The triumphant reception of *Vindiciae Gallicae* at once opened the way for him into the inner councils of reform.) In 1792 he became prominently associated with Fox and Sheridan in the work of the Society of Friends of the People, of which he became the secretary and of whose famous declaration for reform he was the principal author. But his most important service to the association was the publication in July of his *Letter to the Right Hon William Pitt*, a protest occasioned by the proclamation against seditious meetings, "which," to use Mackintosh's own words, "by directing a vague and indiscriminate odium against all political changes confounded in the same storm of unpopularity the wildest projects of subversion and the most measured plans of reform."¹⁴ The

12 Mackintosh's *Memoirs*, I, 61.

13 Dr. Parr's opinion, quoted below, was typical of that of the ultra-Whigs as distinguished from the downright radicals.

14 *Op. cit.*, I, 80. The Society of Friends of the People was organized in April, 1792 by some of the more advanced Whigs and a few of the radicals. It stood for freedom and frequency of election and equal representation, but professed to follow the strictly English line of reform in continuation of the movement of 1780, eschewing the political fermentation to which the French Revolution had given rise. It seems however, that the Friends of the People in Scotland had a much larger radical element. (See Henry W. Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution*, Chapter V.)

proclamation is declared to have been "as effectual in irritating some men into republicanism as Mr. Paine's pamphlets have been in frightening others into Toryism."¹⁵ The *Letter* is less free from innuendo than *Vindiciae Gallicae* and there is less graciousness toward the crafty minister than toward Burke. Dr. Parr admired his friend's courage and in comparing the *Letter* with his own *Sequel* seemed to wish that he himself had paid less respect to his inhibitions.¹⁶

During this year his influence upon radical opinion seems to have been at its height. Godwin records in an autobiographical note¹⁷ for 1792 that, while *Political Justice* was still in incubation, he was introduced to Mackintosh, Joel Barlow, and David Williams and discussed with them at different times the principles of his book. Barlow and Williams were, as we have seen, among the active radical leaders of the time. Apparently Mackintosh, as well as they, had been drawn to Godwin by sympathy of ideas.

His son and biographer devotes only one page to the eventful years between 1792 and 1795. There is a mere reference to a journey which he took into France in the latter part of 1792. It would be interesting to know whether what he possibly learned first-hand of the September massacres was the first thing seriously to disturb his hopes for political regeneration according to the ideas

15 *Ibid.*, I, 81.

16 See letter of Parr to Mackintosh, July 8, 1792, *ibid.*, I, 83. See below, p. 292.

17 C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin, His Friends and Contemporaries* (London, 1876), I, 71.

of the Revolution. However, in a letter¹⁸ to Parr as early as May 17, he already seems to be abating his ardor slightly by admitting the possibility of his "historical delusions" and "speculative excesses." But he still calls himself as great an admirer of French political philosophy as ever. During 1793 and 1794 he seems to have withdrawn into contemplation, devoting his time industriously to his legal studies and frequenting the debating societies. In 1793 as we shall see, however, he openly condemned the war against France because of its subversion of the fundamental principle of national independence and he duly took Burke to task for attributing purity of motive to the allied princes.¹⁹ But in 1794 he shocked his friend Parr by refusing to use his influence in behalf of the unfortunate radical, Joseph Gerrald, who in March had been sentenced to fourteen years transportation for his part in the general British Convention of the radical societies in Edinburgh in late 1793.

In 1796, soon after his admission to the bar in 1795, he began writing for the *Monthly Review*. His radical associations seem in the meantime to have continued unabated. In March he was entertained with Parr and Godwin by Holcroft.²⁰ Godwin writes of one of his visits this year:

I received this year: on the twenty-second of April, a party of twelve persons, the most of whom good-humouredly invited themselves to dine with me . . . Among this party were Dr. Parr and his two daughters,

¹⁸ John Johnstone, *Memoirs of Parr* (London, 1828), p. 396.

¹⁹ *Monthly Review*, XL, 435.

²⁰ *Memoirs of Thomas Holcroft*, II, 182.

Mr. and Mrs. Mackintosh, Mr. Holcroft, Mrs. Wollstonecraft, and Mrs. Inchbald.²¹

In the November and December numbers of the *Monthly Review* for 1796 appeared his critique on Burke's *Thoughts on the Regicide Peace*. This critique is the ablest attack on the war against France, upholding the ideas of Fox. He is now, however, ready to admit to Burke that the "extravagant opinions and violent passions" of the French Revolution were of a dangerous, probably even pernicious, nature to Europe and writes that the only issue between them is "whether a war was a just, effectual, and safe method of averting the danger with which the French Revolution might threaten the governments of Europe."²² He disapproves of an alliance with a confederacy of ambitious princes who are neither "wise, moderate, nor disinterested" and who are more concerned in aggrandizing themselves at the expense of the national independence of France than in directing the war against the Revolution.

Burke, noting that the former fervor of Mackintosh's opinions had been cooled by the excesses of the Revolution, though the war was attacked as an assault upon freedom on behalf of the French royalists, communicated to him indirectly some "very flattering expressions" concerning his sincerity and power of mind. This led to a correspondence in which Mackintosh first confesses a change of mind, laying the *Vindiciae Gallicae* among the sins of his untutored youth:

²¹ C. Kegan Paul, *op. cit.*, I, 154.

²² *Miscellaneous Works* (Phila., 1853), I, 462.

For a time, indeed, seduced by the love of what I thought liberty, I ventured to oppose, without ever ceasing to venerate, that writer who had nourished my understanding with the most wholesome precepts of political wisdom . . . Since that time a melancholy experience has undeceived me on many subjects in which I was then the dupe of my own enthusiasm. I cannot say that I can even now assent to all your opinions on the present politics of Europe. But I can with truth affirm that I subscribe to your general principles.²³

Burke answered in a letter the tone of which must have made the prodigal's heart glad:

As it is on all hands allowed that you were the most able advocate of the cause which you supported, your sacrifice to truth and mature reflection adds much to your glory. For my own part, I am infinitely more pleased to find that you agree with me in several capital points than surprised that I have the misfortune to differ with you on some.²⁴

He ends the letter with an invitation to Beaconsfield.

No direct record of Mackintosh's visit, made during the Christmas season, remains, but Thomas Green in his *Diary of a Lover of Literature*²⁵ has given us an account of his conversation with Mackintosh concerning it. Burke, with a sense of solemnity perhaps deepened by the thought of his own approaching death, called his convert into combat against the moral obliquities with which he charged the revolutionary philosophers:

23 Mackintosh's *Memoirs*, I, 87-88.

24 *Ibid.*, I, 89.

25 See entry for June 13, 1799.

They are the brood of that putrid carcass, that mother of all evil, the French Revolution. I never think of that plague-spot in the history of mankind without shuddering. It is an evil spirit that is always before me. There is not a mischief by which the moral world can be afflicted that it has not let loose upon it. It reminds me of the accursed things that crawled in and out of the mouth of the vile hag in Spenser's Cave of Error . . . You, Mr. Mackintosh, are in vigorous manhood; your intellect is in its freshest prime, and you are a powerful writer; you shall be the faithful knight of the romance; the brightness of your sword will flash destruction on the filthy progeny.²⁶

It was soon evident that Burke's assault had had its intended effect. Regarding his visit Mackintosh was in the habit of saying that in a half hour Burke overturned the reflections of a whole life.²⁷ The unequivocal announcement of his break with revolutionary radicalism was made in his *Lectures on the Law of Nature and of Nations* which were delivered in the hall of Lincoln's Inn during the spring of 1799 and in which he tries to set the limits between the rights of the people and the authority of government. Some alarm was felt upon his announcement of his lectures over the method of treatment of such a subject to be expected from the author of *Vindiciae Gallicae*. To allay this fear he published in late 1798 an introductory discourse, the only part of the lectures ever committed to print.

He begins by vindicating the use of the term "law of nature" and reviewing the work of the masters and

26 Quoted in Mackintosh's *Memoirs*, I, 94.

27 Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer, *Historical Characters* (London, 1867), II, 12.

founders of the science of international law. The law of nature comprises the duties of individuals and is so called "because it is discoverable by natural reason and suitable to our natural constitution and because its fitness and wisdom are founded on the general nature of human beings."²⁸ It was a subject which appealed to his generalizing type of mind. Only the topics which represent his reaction from revolutionary philosophy will be here noted.

In the opening of his argument he summarily dismisses the so-called selfish system:

We often act purely from a regard to the happiness of others, and are therefore social beings; and it is not necessary to be a consummate judge of the deceptions of language to despise the sophistical trifler who tells us that, because we experience a gratification in our benevolent actions, we are therefore exclusively and uniformly selfish.²⁹

In contradistinction to Bentham he considers utility, not a motive to, but a test of virtuous action. The two great institutions of property and marriage are considered the source from which arise most of the relative duties of private life. The duties of men as subjects and sovereigns, citizens and magistrates, are established not on "supposed compacts, which are altogether chimerical, which must be admitted to be false in fact, and which, if they are to be considered as fictions, will be found to serve no purpose of just reasoning, and to be equally the foundation of a system of universal despotism in Hobbes and of

²⁸ *Miscellaneous Works*, I, 29.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 35.

universal anarchy in Rousseau; but on the solid basis of general convenience."³⁰ He disdains any attempt at giving an air of false and specious simplicity to his political theories, "disengaged from all regard to the real nature of things."³¹ It is foolish to apply the processes of pure intelligence, which are logical and simple, to social and political phenomena, which are unstable and complex. "As constitutions of government approach more nearly to that unmixed and uncontrolled simplicity, they become despotic, and as they recede farther from that simplicity they become free."³² A civil code cannot spring complete from the brain of one man; the law must be built up as the facts which are to regulate it arise. From organic evolution in time, not spontaneous generation in the mind, the body of political laws must grow. Here Mackintosh arrives at the heart of Burke's *Reflections*.

From the unpublished MS notes of his lectures, his son extracts a section dealing with the principles of Godwinism in such an intemperate fashion as to justify the philosopher in the statement that Mackintosh was representing him three times a week as "a wretch not fit to live." He charges that the philosophers of the Enlightenment "represent all the ancient usages, all the received opinions, all the fundamental principles, all the most revered institutions of mankind as founded in absurdity, requiring the aid both of oppression and imposture, and leading to the degradation and misery of the human race."³³ He pro-

³⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 37.

³¹ *Ibid.*, I, 40.

³² *Ibid.*, I, 39.

³³ Mackintosh's *Memoirs*, I, 111.

poses to "call in the aid of philosophy, not for the destruction, but for the defence, of experience."³⁴ He anticipates Parr in condemning the Godwinian depreciation of positive institutions and the domestic affections in the name of general benevolence:

There is a philosophy, falsely so called, which, on a hasty glance over the surface of human life, condemns all our institutions to destruction, which stigmatize all our most natural and useful feelings as prejudices, and which, in the vain effort to implant in us principles which take no root in human nature, would extirpate all those principles which sweeten and ennable the life of man.³⁵

He is most relentless in tracing moral perversion to the revolutionary doctrine of perfectibility:

Of this supposed state of future perfection (though it be utterly irreconcilable with reason, with experience, or with analogy), the masters of this sect speak as confidently, as if it were one of the best authenticated events in history . . . The tendency of such a system . . . is to make the whole present order of human life appear so loathesome and hideous, that there is nothing in it to justify either warm affection, or zealous exertion, or even serious pursuit. In seeking an unattainable perfection, it tears up by the roots every principle which leads to the substantial and practicable improvement of mankind.³⁶

³⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 112.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 112. See pp. 306-307 below.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 112.

Certainly Burke, if he had been alive, would have been fully satisfied with this expression of Mackintosh's conversion from French ideas.

The lectures numbered thirty-nine and lasted from January to June. They drew a distinguished audience, about one hundred and fifty attending, among them six peers and a dozen members of the House of Commons. He complained, however, about the absence of his own "friends in opposition." "Poor Godwin," Hazlitt tells us, "who had come, in the *bonhommie* and candour of his nature, to hear what new light had broken in upon his old friend, was obliged to quit the field, and slunk away after an exulting taunt thrown out at 'such fanciful chimeras as a golden mountain or a perfect man.'" ³⁷ Hazlitt has left a vivid ironic account of Mackintosh's violent mass assault upon the stronghold of revolutionary philosophy, in which the orator seems to have been more filled with an extempore fervor than any of his published recantations make him appear :

37 Sir James Mackintosh, *The Spirit of the Age, Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, edited by P. P. Howe (London, 1932), II, 98.

In a letter to Parr of January 3, 1800, Godwin writes of the malignancy of Mackintosh's attack upon the radical philosophers : "Sheltering himself under, what I think, a frivolous apology of naming nobody, he loads indiscriminately the writers of the new philosophy with every epithet of contempt,—absurdity, frenzy, idiotism, deceit, ambition, and every murderous propensity dance through the mazes of his glittering periods: nor has this mighty dispenser of honor and disgrace ever deigned to concede to any of them the least particle of understanding, talent, or taste. He has to the utmost of his power contributed to raise a cry against them, as hollow, treacherous, noxious, and detestable, and to procure them either to be torn in pieces by the mob, or hanged up by the government." (C. Kegan Paul, *op. cit.*, I, 376-377.)

The Modern Philosophy, counter-scarp, outworks, citadel, and all, fell without a blow, by "the whiff and wind of his fell *doctrine*," as if it had been a pack of cards. The volcano of the French Revolution was seen expiring in its own flames, like a bonfire made of straw: the principles of Reform were scattered in all directions, like chaff before the keen northern blast. He laid about him like one inspired; nothing could withstand his envenomed tooth . . . As to our visionary sceptics and Utopian philosophers, they stood no chance with our lecturer—he did not "carve them as a dish fit for the Gods, but hewed them as a carcass fit for hounds".³⁸

Hazlitt regarded the lectures as a sort of exhibition of philosophical juggling, the capacious stores of the speaker's learning being freely drawn upon to make his discourse impressive:

Those of us who attended day after day, and were accustomed to have all our previous notions confounded and struck out of our hands by some metaphysical legerdemain, were at last at some loss to know *whether two and two made four*, till we heard the lecturer's opinion on that head.³⁹

Henry Crabb Robinson, still a Godwinian, reports himself "greatly amused" by Mackintosh's extravagant praise of the British Constitution.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the published portion of the lectures elicited a flattering opinion from Pitt and a rapturous commendation from

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence*, I, 38.

Dr. Parr, who was just then himself in headlong reaction from French philosophy.⁴¹

Thus had the auspicious visions of *Vindiciae Gallicae* been obscured before the end of the decade. Only men of the firmest minds then kept their hopes sustained. Whether or not the promptings of personal ambitions sapped his inner convictions, it would be hard to say. His son writes that he was "too honest and impartial not to acknowledge this change in his feelings."⁴² At any rate, colour was unfortunately lent to the charge when in 1803 he accepted an appointment as recorder of Bombay under a Tory ministry and was knighted immediately afterward. He at least seems to have been pursued by more insinuations regarding his sincerity than the average deserter of revolutionary principles. In his change of opinion he was distrusted by such different men as Porson, Holcroft, Lamb, Coleridge, Parr, Southey and Hazlitt. Porson said that he "meant to have Interest on his Principle."⁴³ Holcroft recorded in his diary for January 20, 1799:

Expressed the pain I felt that a man of such superior powers should act so false a part, and so contrary to his convictions, of which I must in all human probability, be able to form a tolerable accurate opinion, from the many conversations I have had with him.

Charles Lamb delivered the most savage of all reproaches against him in the famous epigram which appeared in the *Albion*:

⁴¹ See p. 297, below.

⁴² *Memoirs*, I, 123.

⁴³ Ford K. Brown, *The Life of William Godwin*, p. 40.

"Though thou'rt like Judas, an apostate black,
 In the resemblance one thing thou dost lack;
 When he had gotten his ill-purchased pelf,
 He went away and wisely hanged himself;
 This thou may do at last, yet much I doubt,
 If thou hast any Bowells to gush out."

Coleridge's analysis of the motives behind Mackintosh's defection is perhaps prejudiced to some extent, by his personal dislike but probably comes very near the truth, as Ford K. Brown says, in indicating a mixture of sincerity and calculation :

Did Curio, the quondam patriot, reformer and semi-revolutionist, abjure his opinion, and yell the foremost in the hunt of persecution against his old friends and fellow-philosophists, with a cold clear predetermined, formed at one moment . . . ? I neither know nor care. · Probably not. But this I know, that to be thought a man of consequence by his contemporaries, to be admitted into the society of his superiors in artificial rank, to excite the admiration of lords, to live in splendour and sensual luxury have been the objects of his habitual wishes . . . A violent motive may revolutionize a man's opinions and professions. But more frequently his honesty dies away imperceptibly from evening into twilight and from twilight into utter darkness. He turns hypocrite so gradually, and by such tiny atoms of motion, that by the time he has arrived at a given point, he forgets his own hypocrisy in the imperceptible degrees of his own conversion." ⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Coleridge seems to have been among the unconvinced from the very beginning. "I shall never forget the *disgust*," he wrote in 1817, with which Mackintosh's 'bear witness,' I *recant, abjure*, and *abhor* the

In the *Morning Post* of December 4, 1800 Coleridge's coarse *jeu d'esprit*, "The Two Round Spaces on the Tombstone," appeared.⁴⁵

The leading apologists for Mackintosh are Macaulay and Jeffrey. Macaulay admired Mackintosh only this side idolatry. He vehemently denies the charge of Wallace, editor of Mackintosh's *History of the Revolution in England*, that Mackintosh abandoned the doctrines of *Vindiciae Gallicae* on account of interested motives; but he does not examine the basis of the charge apart from insisting upon the natural disappointment over the immediate outcome of the Revolution and upon the general moderation of his earlier ideas.⁴⁶ Jeffrey insists that the change which came in 1797 did not imply any change in party principles, but simply a deepening sense of the value of old institutions, that his letters show that he did not lean at all toward Tory doctrine and that he did not let up in his desire for reform. He even thinks Mackintosh's sincerity in supporting reform in 1831 shows that he then "must have been convinced of the fallacy of that argument (in the *Lectures*); and his whole authority passes therefore to the other side of the question."⁴⁷ He unaccountably denies that the *Lectures* contained any radical

principles' — i.e., of his *Vindiciae Gallicae* — struck his audience in Lincoln's Inn" (*Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, II, 193).

45 In a note of the 1834 edition of his poems, Coleridge apologetically said that it was written "in mere sport."

46 See the essay "Sir James Mackintosh," *Edinburgh Review* (July, 1835).

47 Review of Mackintosh's *Memoirs*, *Edinburgh Review*, LXII, 217.

retraction in the substance or scope of Mackintosh's opinions and considers the only difference between *Vindiciae Gallicae* and the *Lectures* an added "gravity and caution." We may confidently reply with the majority of liberals of the time, that, while he did not descend to intolerance, he at least showed an attitude of passive negation toward the earlier objects of his "philanthrophic enthusiasm." Jeffrey's interpretation of *Vindiciae Gallicae*, in fact, in an attempt to prove the general uniformity of Mackintosh's political opinions, ignores all its bolder pronouncements and tones it down to the eminent respectability of a Whig document. For example, it is difficult to see how in *Vindiciae Gallicae* "he pointed steadily to the great institution of property . . . as essential to the being of a state and the well-being of any human society."⁴⁸

The completeness of his revulsion after the lectures of 1799 is plain enough. In 1800, when he repeated the course, his repudiation of the French Revolution was stronger than ever, the growth of the despotism of Napoleon having made his moral more pointed. On January 6, 1800 he wrote to a friend George Moore a passionate recantation of the whole history of his opinions concerning the Revolution up to that time:

48 *Ibid.*, 245. Mrs. Oliphant in her engagingly sympathetic and yet judicious account of Mackintosh does not impute to him any personal blame for his change of opinion. "Mackintosh," writes she, "carried a peculiarly sensitive mental thermometer, and was always ready to admit those modifications of opinion which life, whether we admit them or not, is sure to bring." See her *Literary History of England in the End of the Eighteenth and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1882), III, 266-282.

I abhor, abjure, and forever renounce the French Revolution, with all its sanguinary history, its abominable principles, and forever execrable leaders. I hope I shall be able to wipe off the disgrace of having been once betrayed into an approbation of that conspiracy against God and man, the greatest scourge of the world and the chief stain upon human annals.”⁴⁹

In a letter of March 26, 1800, he praises highly Hall’s *Sermon on Modern Infidelity*, which represents his friend’s stiffening of opinion against the revolutionary philosophy. He warns Hall, in regard to the Dissenters who follow the lead of Priestly, “to guide them and not to be guided by their ignorance and bigotry.”⁵⁰ By 1801 he was paternally devoting himself to the reclamation of the young radical, Basil Montagu, with whom he was associated on the Norfolk circuit. To an interview at the house of Mackintosh’s brother-in-law, John Wedgwood, where they met, Montagu attributes the beginning of his conversion from Godwinism, a conversion completed by the reading of Bacon and Jeremy Taylor at Mackintosh’s suggestion.⁵¹ The inspiration of two letters written in

49 Mackintosh’s *Memoirs*, I, 125.

50 *Ibid.*, I, 127. Cf. his encomium upon Priestley and his defense of the radical Dissenters as “philosophers and friends of humanity,” in *Vindiciae Gallicae*, 375-376.

51 For an account of the friendship between Mackintosh and Montagu, see Montagu’s autobiographical letter to Mackintosh’s son in the *Memoirs*, I, 149-166 and B. Sprague Allen, “Minor Disciples of Radicalism in the Revolutionary Era,” *Modern Philology*, XXI, 277-301. For a further treatment of Montagu as a Godwinian, see J. R. MacGillivray, *Wordsworth and His Revolutionary Acquaintances 1791-1797* (1930), 186, 192, 202-4, 218. This is an unpublished Harvard dissertation.

1802 to Fox by Coleridge for the *Morning Post* and denouncing Fox's French tendencies, was attributed to Mackintosh, who however vehemently denied any connection with them.⁵² In a long letter⁵³ to his friend Richard Sharp December 9, 1804 from India, he fully outlines in a dispassionate fashion the changes in his political sentiments to combat, as he says, the misrepresentation of his opinions. He laments the association of his opinions with practical politics and envies private men of letters, whose purity of motive is more readily accepted than that of public servants. *Vindiciae Gallicae* belongs to the immaturity of his taste and judgment. He admits a "fanatical excess of zeal" for what appeared to be truth—an excess which was made all the more natural by the strength and warmth of personal attachment to friends and enthusiasts of the French Revolution. Deciding that concealment of a change of opinion, which gradually came with the excesses of the Revolution, was no longer a virtue, he rose above that foolish consistency which is the hobgoblin of little minds and in his *Lectures* he gave unrestrained vent to his ideas as modified by experience. But even in them he is willing to admit an excess of the opposite kind and a lack of impartiality. He even apologizes for the lack of civility toward Godwin, attributing it to "the temptation of popular harangues."

His continued association after the lectures with men of liberal tendencies, as well as the candid statements of the above letter to Sharp, lends much likelihood to Crabb

52 See S. T. Coleridge, *Essays on His Own Times* (London, 1850), II, 552-585, and Mackintosh's *Memoirs*, I, 396.

53 Mackintosh's *Memoirs*, I, 128-136.

Robinson's conjecture that in his reaction he had not "gone an inch beyond pure Whiggism."⁵⁴ A dining club, called the King of Clubs, was started at his house, to which belonged at one time or another Rogers, Sharp, Porson, Romilly, Sidney Smith, Jeffrey, Lansdowne, Ricardo, Payne Knight, Cowper, and Blake. While on his law circuit with Basil Montagu, he cultivated an acquaintance with William Taylor and the influential literary circle over which he presided at Norwich. In the latter part of 1802 on a European trip during the peace interregnum he visited Paris, where he seems to have met Barlow, of whom he later speaks as a "Parisian acquaintance."⁵⁵ Here too he developed a friendship with the Abbé Morellet, one of the Encyclopedists, who belonged to Baron d'Holbach's famous dinner group. In a letter of December 14, 1802 to Dugald Stewart, who in his sanguine youth had seen the Revolution born in Paris, he writes of the deadening of the spirit of liberty among the French, which had made them ready for the despotism of Napoleon.⁵⁶ He was attracted to Switzerland, whose subjugation by Napoleon had so shocked him, and, it is said, toured the country with Thomas Poole.⁵⁷

Upon his return from India in 1812 after an absence of eight years spent in "knighted indolence" in which no party animosity or personal ambition disturbed him, he seems to have recovered in very large part from his aliena-

54 *Op. cit.*, I, 38.

55 See diary entry for June 9, 1810 in the *Memoirs*, II, 24.

56 *Ibid.*, I, 179. While in Paris he met Napoleon, who, thinking to compliment him, referred to his "unanswerable answer to Burke."

57 Mrs. L. K. Sandford, *Thomas Poole and His Friends*, II, 90.

tion of mind. In 1813 he entered Parliament as a Whig and became consistently identified with liberal causes. Here he made an appeal for Poland for which he was warmly eulogized by Kosciusko; supported Romilly toward the humanizing of the criminal law, of the measures for the reformation of which he took charge after Romilly's death in 1818; and opposed the repressive measures that followed peace!

He even seems in 1815 to be abating some of his philosophic antipathy to Godwin.⁵⁸ In a review of Godwin's *Lives of Edward and John Phillips*,⁵⁹ he finds occasion to speak of the assured place in philosophical history of *Political Justice*, of the purity of its author's intentions, of his undeserved obloquy, and of his brave adherence to the essence of its opinions, in such a way as to warm the philosopher's heart:

Whatever may be its mistakes, which we shall be the last to underrate, it is certain that works in which errors equally dangerous have been maintained with far less ingenuity, have obtained for their authors a conspicuous place in the philosophical history of the eighteenth century. But books, as well as men, are subject to what is called 'fortune.' The same circumstances which favoured its sudden popularity, have since

⁵⁸ After a spirited exchange of letters in 1799 in which Mackintosh assured him that he had attributed pernicious influences to his doctrines only, not to him, Godwin had evidently acceded to Mackintosh's wish that they "exhibit the example...of men who are literary antagonists but personal friends" (C. Kegan Paul, *op. cit.*, I, 330), and they seem to have kept up a desultory correspondence. Mackintosh's good feeling here is in great contrast to the testiness of his friend Dr. Parr. (See pp. 307-9, below.)

⁵⁹ *Edinburgh Review*, XXV, 485-501.

unduly depressed its reputation . . . The circumstances of the times, in spite of the author's intention, transmuted a philosophical treatise into a political pamphlet. It seemed to be thrown up by the vortex of the French Revolution, and it sank accordingly as the whirlpool subsided; while by a perverse fortune the honesty of the author's intentions contributed to the prejudice against his work. With the simplicity and good faith of a retired speculator, conscious of no object but the pursuit of truth, he followed his reasonings wherever they seemed to lead, without looking up to examine the array of sentiment and institution, as well as of interest and prejudice, which he was about to encounter. Intending no mischief, he considered no consequences; and, in the eye of the multitude, was transformed into an incendiary, only because he was an undesigning speculator. The ordinary clamour was excited against him: even the liberals sacrificed him to their character for liberality . . . and many of his own disciples, returning into the world, and, as usual, recoiling most violently from their visions to the grossest worldly-mindedness, offered the fame of their master as an atonement for their own faults. For a time it required courage to brave the prejudice excited by his name . . . The moment of doing full and exact justice will come . . . He calmly corrected what appeared to him to be his own mistakes; and he proved the perfect disinterestedness of his corrections by adhering to opinions as abnoxious to the powerful as those which he relinquished . . . He has thus, in our humble opinion, deserved the respect of all those, whatever may be their opinions, who still wish that some men in England may think for themselves, even at the risk of thinking wrong; but more especially

of the friends of liberty, to whose cause he has courageously adhered.⁶⁰

He was to make even more handsome amends to Godwin for his unkindness in the *Lectures*. In 1823 he wrote a letter soliciting relief for him and circulated it among the philosopher's friends.⁶¹ Later he was chiefly instrumental in obtaining for Godwin his sinecure office from the government.

In his political philosophy, then, Mackintosh appears to have come almost full circle: a radical in his youth, a conservative in his maturity, and a liberal in his old age. In 1831, the year before his death, he supported the second reading of the Reform Bill in one of his greatest speeches. To Hazlitt,⁶² he seemed "to return in spirit, and in the mild and mellowed maturity of age, to the principles and attachments of his early life." But the spontaneous element in his genius which had found such remarkable expression in *Vindiciae Gallicae* never afterwards achieved full play.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, XXV, 488-489.

⁶¹ See Henry Crabb Robinson, *op. cit.*, I, 492 and C. Kegan Paul, *op. cit.*, II, 283.

⁶² *Op. cit.*, II, 100.

CHAPTER VII

JOSEPH FAWCETT AND WORDSWORTH'S SOLITARY

The name of Joseph Fawcett has fallen for several reasons into an undeserved obscurity. He had no biographer among his contemporaries who might have collected pertinent material while it was most readily available.¹ But, at any rate, his ideas could have won only a very small audience in the years immediately following his death in 1804, even before which his reputation was mercilessly dealt with like that of other radicals.¹ Besides, his personal eccentricities threw into shadow the more solid portions of his fame.¹ In spite of the fact that he was the intellectual godfather of two of the leading thinkers of his age, William Godwin and William Hazlitt, the bulk of the literary memorials which they have left of him is slight.¹ We have, therefore, an exasperatingly small body

1 Hazlitt was reported to have planned to write a life of his friend. On January 15, 1806, Lamb wrote to Hazlitt, favoring the prosecution of his supposed design and hinting that Fawcett's work should be better known: "Mrs. H. was naming something about a "Life of Fawcett" to be by you undertaken: the great Fawcett, as she explained to Manning, when he asked, 'What Fawcett?' He innocently thought *Fawcett the Player*. But Fawcett the divine is known to many people.... You might dish up a Fawcettiad in three months, and ask £60 or £80 for it." (*The Letters of Charles Lamb*, edited by Alfred Ainger, I, 222). But the project never materialized. An extended account of Hazlitt's memories of Fawcett would have done more than can possibly be done now to keep his name alive. W. C. Hazlitt in his memoirs of his grandfather, laments the slenderness of his information about "that excellent and accomplished man." (*Memoirs of William Hazlitt*, II, 240.)

of facts about Fawcett's life, but enough is known about his opinions to give us a fairly distinct portrait of his mind.

After his early training at Ware, he entered the dissenting academy at Daventry in 1774, where he received his training for the Unitarian ministry and declaimed to the thorn bushes on Burrow Hill. In 1780 he began preaching at Walthamstow, Hertfordshire, about fifteen miles from Ware, where in 1778 Godwin had settled as minister to the Dissenters.¹ In 1778 or 1779 Godwin met Fawcett at Ware, and an intimate friendship began between them. It was Fawcett who first turned Godwin's attention toward literature and political theory. This was at least fourteen years before the publication of *Political Justice*. The tribute which Godwin in two autobiographical notes² paid him as the first of "the four principal oral instructors" to whom his mind was "indebted for improvement" is perhaps the best known bit of writing about him:

The four principal oral instructors to whom I feel my mind indebted for improvement were Joseph Fawcet, Thomas Holcroft, George Dyson, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge . . . In my twenty-third year³ I became acquainted with the Rev. Joseph Fawcet, a young man of nearly my own age, one of whose favorite topics was a declamation against the domestic affections. . . . Mr. Fawcet's modes of thinking made a great impression

² C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin, His Friends and Contemporaries* (London, 1871), I, 17.

³ P. P. Howe, in his *Life of William Hazlitt* (page 16), speaks of Fawcett as "the school friend of Godwin," following Hazlitt in his essay on Godwin; but this hardly comports with Godwin's own statement.

upon me, as he was almost the first man I had ever been acquainted with, who carried with him the semblance of original genius.

In 1794 Godwin, it is thought, paid him the compliment in *Caleb Williams* of drawing after him Mr. Clare, the benevolent poet, the only character in the book which awakens our thorough moral approbation. During these and the following years Fawcett was probably in frequent company with Godwin.⁴

In 1783 while still at Walthamstow Fawcett was engaged as Sunday evening lecturer at the Old Jewry meeting-house, a position which he retained for twelve years. He resigned his pastoral work in 1787 on account of doctrinal differences, though he had evidently been more and more drawn from theology to politics. According to a contemporary record, his oratorical gifts attracted to the Old Jewry "the largest and most genteel audience that ever

4 Holcroft, in making a philosophical point against the insincerity of civilized manners, writes of one of Fawcett's adventures with the philosopher, of which Godwin told him at a dinner in 1798: "Godwin mentioned a Mr. — —, whom he and Mr. Fawcett, on a pedestrian ramble, went to visit at Ipswich: Godwin saying that perhaps he would give them beds; if not, he would ask them to supper, and besides they would have the pleasure of seeing the beautiful Cicely, his daughter. They went, stayed some time, but received no invitation. When they came away, Mr. Fawcett said he had three questions to ask Mr. Godwin—How he liked his supper, how he liked his bed, and how he liked Miss Cicely (who had not appeared)? This occasioned me to remark that the fault was probably not in the host but in the hypocrisy of our manners; and that they ought to have freely said they wanted a supper, beds, and to see Miss Cicely." (*Memoirs of Thomas Holcroft*, pp. 192-193) Fawcett furnished Godwin suggestions for his life of Chatham, published in 1783, and "always spoke of his writings with admiration tintured with wonder" (William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age*, pp. 30-31).

assembled in a dissenting place of worship.”⁵ Mrs. Siddons, the Kembles, and Holcroft attended the lectures.

But to us the most interesting of his listeners was the young Wordsworth.⁶ In the spring of 1791 Wordsworth, fresh from graduation at Cambridge, was eagerly getting acquainted with the larger world of London, haunting the streets, where the human scene was in constant flow, or the art galleries, theatres, law courts, Parliament, debating clubs, meeting houses, and churches, where it was whirled into vortices or quietly drawn into pleasant eddies.⁷ The air everywhere was astir with political debates which were echoed from the more liberal pulpits and “warmed the sermons to something above their customary frigidity.”⁸ He heard some of the higher triumphs of the pulpit oratory and was duly impressed by their “awful truths.”⁹ It is more remarkable that the daring political philosophy of the popular preachers did not disturb him than that the “awful truths” of theology should have moved him. That Fawcett was one of these popular preachers whom Wordsworth had in mind when he wrote in the *Prelude* of the power of pulpit oratory in the London of 1791, we know from a sentence of the Fenwick note of 1843 to the *Excursion*:¹⁰

⁵ *Gentleman's Magazine*, February, 1804.

⁶ See Book VII of *The Prelude*.

⁷ Emile Legouis, *The Early Life of William Wordsworth* (London, 1897), p. 178.

⁸ Nor did the Pulpit's oratory fail
To achieve its higher triumph. Not unfelt
Were its admonishments, nor lightly heard
The awful truths delivered thence by tongues
Endowed with various power to search the soul.

The Prelude, VII, 544-548.

It happened to me several times to be one of his congregation through my connection with Mr. Nicholson of Cateaton Street, who at that time [the time of Wordsworth's "frequent residences in London at the beginning of the French Revolution"], when I had not made many acquaintances in London, used often to invite me to dine with him on Sundays; and I took that opportunity (Mr. N. being a dissenter) of going to hear Fawcett, who was an able and eloquent man.

The restraint with which Wordsworth speaks of these visits is that of the poet laureate conservative of 1843, not that of the revolutionary radical of 1793.⁹ It is more than likely that at the very time Wordsworth was coming under the influence of Godwin in 1793 he was also sitting at the feet of Fawcett in the Old Jewry.¹⁰ Legouis⁹ thinks that Fawcett may have introduced Wordsworth to Godwin's philosophy, that as early as 1791, attracted by the revolutionary character of the utterances of such a famous man, the young poet probably imbibed from him his first draught of revolutionary doctrine!

Hazlitt's association with Fawcett began somewhat later after his retirement from his lectureship and the ministry in 1795 to Hedgegrove,¹⁰ Hertfordshire, where

⁹ See *op. cit.*, 226.—It has, however, been shown that Paine's influence was predominant upon Wordsworth's most outright revolutionary pronouncement, *A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*, written in the early part of 1793. (Edward Niles Hooker, Wordsworth's Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff, *Studies in Philology* (July, 1931). But Fawcett undoubtedly contributed an ingredient to Wordsworth's thinking between 1791 and 1795.

¹⁰ Ford K. Brown has mistakenly left the impression that Hazlitt met Fawcett six or seven years earlier. (See his *Life of William Godwin*, New York, 1926, p. 14.)

he devoted the remaining nine years of his life to farming and writing. In a note on Fawcett in his edition of the *Memoirs of Thomas Holcroft* (1810), Hazlitt has given us in the spirit of youthful hero-worship an engaging picture of Fawcett's personality and powers:

The late Rev. Joseph Fawcett, author of the *Art of War*, etc. It was he who delivered the Sunday evening lectures at the Old Jewry which were so popular about twenty years ago. He afterwards retired to Hedgegrove in Hertfordshire. It was here that I first became acquainted with him, and passed some of the pleasantest days of my life. He was the friend of my early youth. He was the first person of literary eminence whom I had then known; and the conversations I had with him on the subjects of taste and philosophy (for his taste was as refined as his powers of reasoning were profound and subtle) gave me a delight such as I can never feel again. The writings of Sterne, Fielding, Cervantes, Richardson, Rousseau, Godwin, Goethe, etc., were the usual subjects of our discourse, and the pleasures I had in reading these authors seemed more than doubled. Of all the persons I have ever known, he was the most perfectly free from every taint of jealousy or narrowness. Never did a mean or sinister motive come near his heart.¹¹

¹¹ Fawcett, like Godwin, had the power of electrifying intellectually alert young men with his ideas.¹²

11 Page 192.

12 Basil Montague, Hazlitt hints to us, was one of the group of Fawcett's youthful admirers. In the days before his conversion to conservatism by Mackintosh, he began his sentences every few minutes with "Fawcett used to say." (*Memoirs of William Hazlitt*, II, 242.)

The catholicity of Fawcett's ideas and tastes appealed especially to his young disciple. He had more charity than the average radical. He had Paine's *Rights of Man* and Burke's *Reflections* bound up in one volume and said that together they made a very good book. This Hazlitt thought "a singular proof of good taste, good sense, and liberal thinking."¹³ In a passage of his essay *On Criticism*, Hazlitt takes occasion to use Fawcett as an example of the superiority of catholicity of taste over the narrowness of appreciation and littleness which men of more original genius often show. He brought to his disciple a mind enriched with all good things, a goodness of heart, a generosity of feeling, and an intellectual honesty. He was the type of ready man which Bacon says conference makes, but the springs of communication were more or less deadened when he committed his thoughts to the public. The passage makes us wish that the young Hazlitt had Boswellized:

The person of the most refined and least contracted taste I ever knew was the late Joseph Fawcett, the friend of my youth. He was . . . most candid and unsophisticated. He had a masterly perception of all styles and of every kind and degree of excellence . . . If you had a favorite author, he had read him too, and knew all the best morsels, the subtle *traits*, the capital touches. "Do you like Sterne?"—"Yes, to be sure," he would say, "I should deserve to be hanged, if I didn't!" . . . He read the poetry of Milton with the same fervor and spirit of devotion that I have since heard others read their own. "That is the most delicious feeling of all," I have heard him exclaim, "to like what is excellent, no matter whose it is." In this respect he practiced what he preached.

¹³ *Ibid.*, II, 291.

. . . There was no flaw or mist in the clear mirror of his mind. He was as open to impressions as he was strenuous in maintaining them. . . . Most men's minds are to me like musical instruments out of tune. Touch a particular key, and it jars and makes harsh discord with your own. They like Gil Blas, but can see nothing to laugh at in Don Quixote; they adore Richardson, but are disgusted with Fielding. Fawcett had a taste accommodated to all these. He was not exceptionless. He gave a cordial welcome to all sorts, provided they were the best of their kind. . . . His own style was laboured and artificial to a fault, while his character was frank and ingenuous in the extreme. He was not the only individual whom I have known to counteract their real disposition in coming before the public, and by avoiding what they perhaps thought an inherent infirmity, debar themselves of their real strength and advantages. . . . He made me feel (by contrast) the want of genuine sincerity and generous sentiment in some that I have listened to since.¹⁴

We now turn from the records of Fawcett's period of greatest influence left by his contemporaries to his own writings. His first publication was a sermon delivered March 28; 1790, at the Old Jewry, "On the Propriety and Importance of Public Worship." He shows here none of the bitterness or headstrong proclivities of some of his brother Dissenters. The *Gentleman's Magazine*¹⁵ commends him for being different in spirit from the hot-headed reformers who are against all ceremony and would have the meeting house absolutely supplant the church.

But in the two volumes of *Sermons Delivered at the Evening Lecture at Old Jewry* and in his poem, *The Art*

¹⁴ *Table Talk* (Everyman's edition), pp. 224-225.

¹⁵ LXI, 245-246 (March, 1791),

of *War*, all of which were published in 1795, he emerges before the reading public as the outright champion of the new philosophy in all its implications. Here are the ideas of Godwin which Fawcett was undoubtedly preaching in 1793 and by which he helped *Political Justice* to win many converts! In fact, the autobiographical note of Godwin already quoted makes it certain that Fawcett had provided him with some of these very ideas, particularly those on general benevolence. He is, as we shall see, in general agreement with Godwin in the belief in infinite perfectibility, the all-powerful influence of law and education, the ease with which the truth which makes one free is discovered, and the efficacy of reason in ending war. ¶

The *Sermons*, though in places stuffed with the artificial flowers of rhetoric, show a sturdiness of thought which needs only a more athletic diction to give it distinction. The *Monthly Review* for September, 1796, declares that they represent "the union of reason, fancy, and passion . . . in an uncommon degree." Fawcett is here a Christian rationalist—more rationalist than Christian. He uses Christian doctrine to support revolutionary ideas and Christian prophecy to point to the millennium to which the reign of reason will lead.

¶The sermon, "Right and Wrong Judgment the Origin of Virtue and Vice,"¹⁶ the title of which suggests the tracing of evil to error of mind rather than to moral obliquity, is an example of how independent he sometimes became of Christian doctrine. The discourse has its foundations, of course, in the doctrine of necessity. "On the Respect Due to all Men" is pure Rousseau in its equalitarianism. "The high and low," he writes, "are on a perfect level in the

system of nature."¹⁷ Man has degenerated from the primal dignity of his species in the state of nature by admitting the inequalities of servant and master and all the various differentiations which the growth of the social state brought. "On Disinterested Goodness" is a discourse which develops the Godwinian philosophy of gratitude and reward. A good action with gratitude as its motive has none of the spirit of charity nor any tendency to produce it. He says:¹⁸

A truly generous man is principally pleased to contemplate the gratitude of those upon whom he bestows benefits in proportion as he has reason to consider it, not as the tribute of a selfish mind to himself, but of a sensible mind to the beauty of goodness.¹⁸

A man's goodness is gauged by the expression of his love for his species, not by that of a special affection.¹⁹

In the sermon entitled "Christianity Vindicated as not particularly inculcating Friendship and Patriotism," Fawcett even draws arguments from Scripture against these two supposedly major virtues. Friendship and patriotism are thought of as "limited and partial operations of the social principle."¹⁹ Instead of these, Christ himself taught universal benevolence when he defined the neighbor as man. Fawcett pursued the gospel of universal benevolence with logic as relentless as Godwin's:¹⁹

Friendship and Patriotism, so far as they stand distinguished from general humanity and philanthropy, so far as we consider only what is peculiar to them . . .

¹⁷ II, 75.—The *Sermons* are quoted from the edition of 1801.

¹⁸ II, 118-119.

¹⁹ II, 127.

will not appear to possess any moral beauty . . . The capricious preference of this or that particular man, a preference not founded in any perceptions of moral pre-eminence in him over the rest of mankind, but merely arising from habits of accidental intimacy—such a partiality, though perfectly natural and though within proper limits perfectly innocent, is not to be considered as a branch of social virtue. . . . An ardor such as this may excite the remark and admiration of mankind, it may be quoted as a singular example, added to the proverbs of the world, numbered among the beauties of history, make a figure in the pages of romance, and furnish a fruitful theme for eloquence to expatiate upon; but it has no claim to the calm applause of moral Wisdom.²⁰

There may not be a greater love than that of him who lays down his life for his friend, but there is a higher justification of self-sacrifice than this in the conviction that one is doing good to society as a whole or to as large part of it as possible. Such a sacrifice was Christ's. "This is more than friendship; this is philanthropy and public spirit; this is conduct which panegyric cannot flatter or poetry embellish."²¹ There is an irreducible element in the private affections which must be offset by a regard for the good of the social whole. A narrow patriotism is the greatest enemy of the brotherhood of man, and the spirit of nationalism unrestrained puts the rest of the human race outside the pale of justice or even charity. Universal happiness is often inconsistent with national prosperity. Substitute charity for friendship and patriotism. Finally,

²⁰ II, 130-131.

²¹ II, 132.

Fawcett is careful to say that he does not advocate a rooting out of the natural affections, but such a control of them that, wherever the heart of humanity beats, we may put ourselves into harmony with it. As we have said, he was undoubtedly one of the sources of Godwin's arguments about the implications of the idea of justice in personal relations.

The Art of War is Fawcett's most ambitious effort in verse. In style he would fain belong to the tradition of Shakespeare and Milton, echoes of whom are generously sprinkled over the poem. He seems not at all to be affected by the influences which were soon to be erected into a new gospel of criticism by Wordsworth in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. The poem has practically all the faults which Wordsworth there condemns: over-use of personification, showy and artificial diction, over-blown magnificence of description, and an imagination goaded to overreach itself by "the application of gross and violent stimulants." Through 1257 lines of blank verse he goes sounding on his way, not as "a man speaking to men," but as an orator hailing mankind from an isolated Gothic tower of expression in a language few of them know.

But the excesses of his style should not obscure for us the magnanimity of his thought, which the gaudy dress he gives his ideas so ill becomes. A critic in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for June, 1795, an organ usually inhospitable to liberal thought, though depreciating it as art, commends it as an honest effort to allay the passion of war. Even Wordsworth in 1843, who then was very grudging in his praise of ideas that had engaged his sanguine youth, wrote of it: "He published a poem on war, which had a good deal of merit, and made me think more about him than I

should otherwise have done."²² Professor Harper, who has made the first satisfying attempt since Hazlitt, to evaluate Fawcett and his work, writes of *The Art of War* as "a noble piece of work" and "a generous and humane effusion."²³ It is instinct with the new humanitarianism.¹ Fawcett is more eager to condemn war as an instrument of policy, to destroy the glamour with which it has been surrounded, to castigate the social and moral order that has raised war to the dignity of an art (the very title is intended to suggest reproach), than he is to achieve high literary merit./

The poem is in consonance with the general opinion of the radicals on war at the time. Like Godwin's *Political Justice*²⁴ and to a somewhat less extent, many of the earlier poems and prose writings of Wordsworth and his literary group,²⁵ it traces the roots of war to aristocracy and monarchy, which use the people thus as the helpless instruments of their own aggrandizement and exploitation and which substitute for the love of our species a wholesale vain-glorious selfishness parading under the name of patriotism. As Professor Beatty suggested,²⁶ however, *The Art of War* buttresses the humanitarian gospel and

22 Fenwick note to *The Excursion*.

23 George McLean Harper, *William Wordsworth* (New York, 1923), I, 262.

24 See Book I, Chapters II-III and Book V, Chapters XVI-XX, of the edition of 1796; and Arthur Beatty, "Joseph Fawcett, *The Art of War*, Its Relation to the Early Development of William Wordsworth" in *Univ. of Wis. Stud. in Lang. and Lit.*, no. 2, 227-230.

25 For a list of the writings of these men on the theme of war, see *ibid.*, pp. 234-235.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 235.

the war poems of Wordsworth and his friends with a more open, thoroughgoing, and devastating attack upon war in the name of the radical philosophy.¹

To Fawcett, war is murder "methodized to art," dignified with the name of a profession, and celebrated in art and song:²⁷

Named Noble Science! in the number rank'd
Of fair reputed callings, thick that throng
The door of active life, and court the choice
Of doubtful youth! among the paths that lead
To Fame's high fane, among the Muse's themes
Plac'd eminent in front!

He paints a satirical picture²⁸ of a council of state solemnly met to prostitute their reason to the ends of destruction. In the description of the horrors of war he rises to a declamatory fury in a tongue often as little that of men as of angels.²⁹ The celebration of a military victory, in which "religion joins the joy," is "a feast of blood" and described as a climax of the people's surrender of reason to passion.³⁰ A fallen warrior's widow, frantic with grief, emerges from the throng to declaim against these unseemly orgies of victory and the spurious public

27 Lines 64-70.—I have followed the text as reprinted by Beatty in the article named above.

28 Lines 95-118.

29 Lines 129-249, 823-910.—For example, he calls upon the reader to see fire, among other gifts of nature perverted to evil uses by war, the sun's

. . . waving work
Impious undo, consume the yellow year,
And beauteous Ceres to a cinder change!

30 Lines 250-318.

glory which cloaks the tragedies in private lives.³¹ How little reason has ruled mankind and directed the course of history is shown by the fact that war has been the "fix'd phrenzy" of all the nations and of every age.³² Civilization, under the control of aristocrats and kings, has only served to fasten upon mankind this barbarous custom in which men are simply used as passive pawns in a huge game of death. War has become a business enterprise to which learning as well as art has prostituted itself and in which

. . . sober warriors, in square array,
With science kill, with ceremony slay.³³

What has aristocratic culture taught mankind except to make

Politer slaughter, and genteely learn'd
To lay more elegantly waste the world?³⁴

Military pageantry is used to lull the people into complacency and to lure them into the whited sepulcher of war.³⁵ But international tribunals wielding codes of law, such as have been evolved in the twentieth century, would have connoted to Fawcett a universal reign of positive institution. This was considered hardly possible in the life mundane nor devoutly to be wished by a disciple of reason, who in finally displacing law would sheathe even

31 Lines 319-363.—Professor Beatty pointed out the similarity between this episode and the story of Wordsworth's *Guilt and Sorrow*.

32 Lines 364-410.

33 Lines 452-453.

34 Lines 520-521.

35 Lines 1079-1132.

the sword of Michael; and whose coming empire, unlike those of hereditary autocratic rulers, would be based upon the sense of right and justice, never impaired in the normal mind untrammeled by law and institution, and would eventually cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Law is, after all, only "feeble regent in young Reason's room." To Reason, then, is addressed his final apostrophe :

The pigmy violence, the private scene
 That vexes, and that hides his head minute
 From human justice, it is thine to end;
 And thine the tall and Titan-crimes that lift
 Their heads to heaven and laugh at laws, to thee
 All might belongs: haste, reach thy ripened years!
 Mount thine immortal throne, and sway the world!³⁶

It would be superfluous here to show that all the leading ideas of *The Art of War*—from necessity through sensationalism, the identification of war with murder and its association with the whole calendar of crime, the false romantic coloring which obscures the reality of war, the use of war by the rich as the means of exploiting the poor, to the instrumentality of reason as the panacea—have a common source in that great reservoir of ideas from which Godwin drew the doctrines of *Political Justice*. Many of them were most probably taken from *Political Justice* itself.

In his next publication, *The Art of Poetry*, which appeared in 1797, Fawcett turns to literary criticism under the pseudonym of Sir Simon Swan. In form and spirit it belongs to the tradition of Pope's *Essay on Criticism*.

³⁶ Lines 1251-1257.

He has a ready command of the heroic couplet and his didactic purpose is frequently lost in satire. In so far as it indicates his literary sympathies, it shows him opposed to the extreme manifestations of both classicism and romanticism. He ridicules those poems of which "correctness is the *only* or *chief* excellence, not correctness in the abstract but correct dulness."³⁷ Not that he thinks negligence a necessary accompaniment of genius, but it is more important for the genuine spirit of poetry to attain beauties than to escape faults. He contemns the neo-classical correctness, which, in escaping peccadillos, sacrifices all grandeur:

Let Fancy all her loftier flights forbear,
And each minuter beauty make her care.
The courtly reader's finely structured eye
Sees only coarseness in sublimity:
And all too weak e'en Beauty's form to gaze,
Lets fairy Prettiness usurp her praise.
Like a trim garden should thy song appear,
Nought great or bold must find admission there:
No forest swell, no mountains pierce the sky,
No giant scenes impress with awe the eye,
But little flowers in nicest order grow,
O'er neat parterres, a blooming rareeshow!³⁸

He satirizes that plaintive sentimental poetry, which, unlike the true elegy, is not the thoughtful outcome of a melancholy mood and generosity of feeling but is a compound of "that egotism of complaint of which *self* is the incessant subject"³⁹ and affectation, and, instead of ex-

37 Preface to *Poems* (1798), page iv. *The Art of Poetry* appears here in an enlarged edition.

38 *Poems*, 262-263.

39 Preface to *Poems*, p. v.

pressing real suffering, produces the effect of pathos by tricks of art. The sentimental pretense which vitiates elegiac poetry is very cleverly hit off.⁴⁰ He sees no new domains of poetic feeling opened by modern knowledge. He looks askance at the efforts in recent poetry, such as Darwin's *Loves of the Plants*, to make "mechanic industry" and science dear and genuine inmates of the household of man.⁴¹ He has little respect for the Gothic element in romanticism. Here are satirical directions for a poem with the staple of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels:

Let hideous Superstition frame the base,
 On which the wildly dismal tale you raise:
 Let ghastliest forms, pale ghosts, and goblins grim,
 Form of your verse the terrible sublime!
 Paint the dire skeleton, uncloth'd with skin,
 With grave worms crawling out and crawling in!
 All hell's red torches in the numbers shine,
 And fiends on horseback gallop through the line.⁴²

Elsewhere his liberal sympathies show more clearly through his literary criticism. In particular, the fulminations of *The Anti-Jacobin* (1797-1798) and of Mathias in his *Pursuits of Literature* (1794-1797) against the radicals are ridiculed as a debasement of the Muse.⁴³

Fawcett's volume of collected poems, which appeared in 1798, is made up of eleven elegies, five sonnets, and fourteen miscellaneous pieces, besides reprints of *The Art of War*, under the title *Civilized War*, and of *The Art of*

⁴⁰ *Poems*, 260-261.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 264-265, 267-268.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 272.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 269-270.

Poetry. The new poems of this volume are less burdened by outworn poetic diction and loud declamation than the earlier ones, and in the sonnets and some of the shorter poems, like "Louisa, A Song"⁴⁴ and the two entitled "To a Robin," he has escaped almost completely the turpitude and bombast for which his contemporaries criticized him so much. In fact, the *Monthly Review* for March, 1799, in its review of the volume went so far as to declare that "in point of vigor of imagination, splendor of imagery, and force of expression, he has not many superiors among modern poets." "On Visiting the Gardens at Versailles" shows his dislike of nature methodized in "formal scenery." In this respect at least, he is in the stream of eighteenth century romanticism. And, thorough liberal that he is, he looks upon the elaborate landscape gardening of Versailles as an evidence of the extension over nature of the same despotic power that has ruled mankind. In "On Visiting the Gardens at Ermenonville," he paints a scene in which the natural world is no longer under the restraint of "the tyrant law" of art; and the congeniality of unspoilt nature with the spirit of Rousseau, who lies buried there, gives the piece its point. In the advertisement to his "Ode on the Commemoration of the French Revolution in the Champs de Mars, July 14, 1792," he tells us that he witnessed the event described.⁴⁵ In larger part it celebrates the fall of the Bastille, which marked "a mighty people's coronation day." In "A War

⁴⁴ Professor Harper (*William Wordsworth*, I, 264) conjectures the influence of "Louisa, A Song" upon Wordsworth's "Louisa," written in 1805. Might not also the echo of its tender elegiac note have wrought an unconscious influence upon the Lucy poems, written the year after its publication?

⁴⁵ *Op. cit.*, 166.

Elegy" he tells a story of individual distress caused by war to supplement the general pictures of its calamities given in *The Art of War*.

In his last book, *War Elegies*, published in 1801, he illustrates further the distresses of war by individual examples. The eleven poems of this volume, then, are popularized expressions of the concrete horrors of war intended to reach a larger audience than *The Art of War*. "Victory" is a vigorous denunciation of the use of prayer and praise to God for the havoc, spoil, and ruin of war, upon whomever visited. "The Recruit," "The Impress," and "The Soldier's School" are merciless "analytical representations" of the seductive methods and often barbarous practices by which the blood offerings to Moloch are gathered.

It remains to clear up certain misconceptions in regard to Fawcett's character fostered largely by lack of sympathy with his ideas and to present some conclusions about his later years after his retirement from the ministry in 1795. Hazlitt has given us most of the knowledge we have of him at this period. As we have noted, it was not until after Fawcett had removed to Hedgegrové that he became Hazlitt's mentor. The only point in his biography beyond this which Hazlitt fixes is his attendance upon Mackintosh's *Lectures*⁴⁶ in 1799 as an unregenerate listener. Hazlitt's sparse account shows Fawcett an altogether admirable character, but an unfortunate impression of weakness has been left by the last sentence of the note in his *Memoirs of Thomas Holcroft*: "He was one of the

⁴⁶ In his *Lectures on the Law of Nature and of Nations*, Mackintosh repudiated his earlier revolutionary philosophy, set forth in *Vindiciae Gallicae*, his reply to Burke's *Reflections*. See pp. 175-181, above.

most enthusiastic admirers of the French Revolution; and I believe the disappointment of the hopes he had cherished of the freedom and happiness of mankind, preyed upon his mind and hastened his death."⁴⁷ It would seem from this that Fawcett at least never recovered from the emotional shock caused by the failure of the Revolution.

| But what has done more than anything else to fix the portrait of Fawcett for posterity is the unflattering estimate which was left of him in the Fenwick note to *The Excursion*. According to the Fenwick note, the conservatively hardened Wordsworth of 1843 thought that Fawcett did not have enough ballast of character to ride the waves of revolution, and he seemed disposed to credit an unconfirmed report that Fawcett ended his days a moral derelict:⁴⁸

His Christianity was probably never deeply rooted; and, like many others in those times of like showy talents, he had not enough strength of character to withstand the effects of the French Revolution, and of the wild and lax opinions which had done so much towards producing it, and far more in carrying it forward in its extremes. Poor Fawcet, I have been told, became pretty much such a person as I have described [in the poem]; and early disappeared from the stage, having fallen into habits of intemperance, which I have heard (though I will not answer for the fact) hastened his death.

| Wordsworth, then, it appears, though he admitted the slipperiness of his hold upon facts about Fawcett, thought of him in 1843 as a terrible example of what revolutionary philosophy unchecked will do for a man. He had Faw-

cett, among others, sit for the portrait of the Solitary, "a character suitable to my purpose, the elements of which I drew from several persons with whom I had been connected, and who fell under my observation during frequent residences in London at the beginning of the French Revolution." He then introduces the name of Fawcett with a patronizing air: "The chief of these was, one may *now* say, a Mr. Fawcett, a preacher at the dissenting meeting-house at the Old Jewry."⁴⁸ The Solitary is intended to represent the moral disintegration of a Godwinian, from which Wordsworth rescued himself through the return to nature and the recovery of joy in the companionship of his sister Dorothy. He is the persistent Godwinian whom the backwash of the revolutionary philosophy had left to face a world hostile to his opinions and had driven into a devastating scepticism.!

Recent scholarship, it is true, has thrown doubt upon the complete reliability of the Fenwick notes. As is well known, the elder Wordsworth interpreted all his earlier poetry in the light, not of the time in which it was written, but of a time in which he had no pleasure in the salad days of his greener judgment. Wordsworth's soul, however, had, at least nine years before the publication of *The Excursion*, begun to lose its zest for adventure and to retire to its ancestral estates in the country of traditional institutions. But Miss Fenwick, writes Professor Harper, was "a perfervid and credulous hero-worshipper"; and so for this reason, too, the notes which she took down from Wordsworth's dictation in 1843 "should not be too un-

⁴⁸ Fenwick note to *The Excursion*.

questioningly depended upon."⁴⁹ Some may think that Miss Fenwick, "constantly moved with religious feeling"⁵⁰ and an uncritical admiration for the old poet, magnified his unfavorable opinion of this religious free-thinker. The note, however, is not too extreme for one who more than thirty years before had told Crabb Robinson that he would "shed his blood"⁵¹ for the Established Church. In any case, what Wordsworth is reported to have said in 1843 and the consequent equating of the Solitary's philosophy with Fawcett's have since then done wrong to his memory.

It is not intended to leave the impression that one of Wordsworth's purposes in writing *The Excursion* was to make a personal attack upon Fawcett.⁵² The spirit of high philosophic purpose which pervades the poem precludes such a view. It appears that no readers in 1814 recognized Fawcett's portrait in the Solitary, with the possible exception, as we shall see, of Hazlitt. So far as there is any record, Wordsworth did not openly admit before 1843 that he had Fawcett in mind when he wrote the poem. However, the italicized "*now*" of the quotation above does more than hint that before then he had forborne mentioning Fawcett by name for prudential reasons.

A closer examination of the life and opinions of the Solitary will reveal to what extent Wordsworth probably had Fawcett in mind in 1814 and how the poet's anti-radical views may be considered to have colored his interpretations of Fawcett's character. To separate clearly the

⁴⁹ George McLean Harper, *op. cit.*, II, 408.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 405.

⁵¹ *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, ed. T. Sadler (London, 1872), I, 250.

elements of character in the Solitary which may have been suggested by the career of Fawcett from those which belong to others, is quite difficult, since we unmistakably know so little of him and since the portrait is a composite one. Wordsworth tells us of only one of the men who unconsciously sat with Fawcett for the picture, an unnamed Scotchman past middle age who came to live at Grasmere soon after Wordsworth's arrival, who had for many years been a chaplain to a Highland regiment, and who in his appearance bore the marks of ill fortune and depression of spirits. But since the Scotchman was "in no respect an interesting character"⁵² except in appearance and since Wordsworth knew very little about him, the ideas of the Solitary as a whole, it seems, are to be associated with Fawcett, or men of his type.

The youth of the Solitary seems to have been suggested by what Wordsworth knew of that of the Scotchman; his maturity hints much more clearly at what we know of the life of Fawcett. The Solitary had entered the ministry to indulge his social vanity, become a chaplain in a Highland regiment, married into wealth, relinquished his office, retired to the country where he lived seven years, lost his wife and two children within a year, and then fallen into an apathy "to private interest dead, and public care." So far⁵³ the Scotchman seems to have provided the staple of the Solitary's biography. Here the narrative turns to run exactly parallel to Fawcett's life at the point when in revolutionary transport he left Walthamstow on the eve of the Revolution to devote his time more exclusively to lecturing at the Old Jewry:

⁵² Fenwick note.

⁵³ See *The Excursion*, II, 164-210.

He broke from his contracted bounds, repaired,
To the great City, an emporium then
Of golden expectations, and receiving
Freights every day from a new world of hope.
Thither his popular talents he transferred;
And, from the pulpit zealously maintained
The cause of Christ and civil liberty,
As one, and moving to one glorious end.
Intoxicating service! I might say
A happy service; for he was sincere
As vanity and fondness for applause,
And new and shapeless wishes would allow.⁵⁴

Wordsworth very conceivably had in mind Fawcett's characteristic combination of radical philosophy and Christianity when he wrote:

. . . there arose
A proud and most presumptuous confidence
In the transcendent wisdom of the age,
And her discernment; not alone in rights,
And in the origin and bounds of power
Social and temporal; but in laws divine,
Deduced by reason.⁵⁵

It is easy to imagine, too, that Fawcett's relinquishment of the ministry, or rather of the lectureship, at the height of Pitt's persecution of the radicals was interpreted by Wordsworth, in the words of the Wanderer, as a renunciation of Christianity and a lapse into the slough of infidelity into which the high road of reason had led him.

54 *Ibid.*, II, 215-226.—This is quoted from the account of the Wanderer, who is, generally speaking, the poet himself. The Solitary gives a fuller account in Book III, 706-767.

55 *Ibid.*, II, 234-240.

And free-thinking had brought in its train a weakening of the private virtues :

He broke faith with them whom he had laid
 In earth's dark chambers, with a' Christian's hope !
 An infidel contempt of holy writ
 Stole by degrees upon his mind ; and hence
 Life, like that Roman Janus, double-faced ;
 Vilest hypocrisy—the laughing, gay
 Hypocrisy, not leagued with fear, but pride.
 Smooth words he had to wheedle simple souls ;
 But, for disciples of the inner school,
 Old freedom was old servitude, and they
 The wisest whose opinions stooped the least
 To know restraints ; and who most boldly drew
 Hopeful prognostications from a creed,
 That, in the light of false philosophy,
 Spread like a halo round a misty moon,
 Widening its circle as the storms advance.
 His sacred function was at length renounced ;
 And every day and every place enjoyed
 The unshackled laymen's natural liberty ;
 Speech, manners, morals, all without disguise.
 . . . the course
 Of private life licentiously displayed
 Unhallowed actions—planted like a crown
 Upon the insolent aspiring brow
 Of spurious notions—worn as open signs
 Of prejudice subdued.⁵⁶

'The Solitary's own story of this part of his career, given in Book III.⁵⁷ is nearer the truth of Fawcett's life than is the Wanderer's story. The Solitary refused, he

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 247-272.

⁵⁷ Lines 768-830.

himself tells us, to join the retreat of the liberals immediately after 1792 and, while hopes for the actual immediate emancipation of the world were, he saw, to be left unfulfilled, he felt "in part compensated," as Wordsworth himself had been for a time, by the privilege of retiring into himself to secure his own emancipation in the land of abstraction, "where the irony of events could no longer exasperate by its inconsistency with theory, nor an illogical reality confront the logical mind with its discrepancies and incoherence."⁵⁸ This corresponds to the period just before 1795 when Fawcett was preaching Godwinism with such effect. But finally, having been made the object of a growing persecution that expressed "the panic dread of change," the Solitary sailed for America, lived among the Indians, supposed unspoiled children of nature, to find among them no "pure archetype of human greatness," and returned disappointed again.⁵⁹ Embittered and disillusioned, without peace of mind about the cosmos, but within himself "not comfortless" and still intellectually alert, he had finally settled in his native mountain solitudes,⁶⁰ entertaining the hope that he would soon reach "the unfathomable gulf, where all is still."⁶¹ According to the Wanderer, he had retired here, morally debased, to waste the remainder of his days,

58 Emile Legouis, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

59 Lines 831-955.—This seems to be an episode manufactured out of imagination.

60 In the retreat of the Solitary, a recess in the mountains between the vales of Langdale, there is nothing to suggest Fawcett's retreat at Hedgegrov[e]. Moreover, Hazlitt gives us the impression that Fawcett was not by any means wedded to solitude.

61 Book III, 991.

Steeped in a self-indulging spleen, that wants not
Its own voluptuousness,⁶²

his abhorrence of man not softened by his joy in nature.

The Solitary's philosophy is detailed in the third book of *The Excursion*. The poet is primarily concerned with that part of the thought of the Enlightenment which does not comport with Christian doctrine: the advocacy of blind chance against intelligent power in creation, a preference of "the senseless grave" over immortality as "a sanctuary from doubt and sorrow," the belief in "the mechanic structure" of moral truth, and a general questioning of the goodness of the universe as it is. The Solitary has lost the high opinion of human nature which Godwin had taught and is

. . . habitually disposed
To seek in degradation of the Kind
Excuse and solace for his own defects.⁶³

Yet he is the unregenerate apostle of reason still. He is not impressed with the Wanderer's idea that superstition grounded in the thinking habits of generations is a better guide to truth than reason. That the soul has direct access to truth independent of the understanding, is much easier for him to accept than this.

In the fourth book, the Wanderer, in correcting the Solitary's despondency, urges communion with nature, a reliance upon Providence, and the superiority of imagination to reason in the search for truth. The Wanderer's theology endows the sovereign power of the universe with personality, affections, and a will; and upon the belief in

⁶² Book II, 311-312.

⁶³ Book IX, 787-789.

immortality bases the doctrine that life is essentially good and that the world means us well. Since the soul and nature derive from the same great original pattern, there is made possible a communion with the divinity through nature. Wordsworth's purpose in the unwritten sequel was to call down fire from heaven to melt the obdurate heart of the Solitary, to bring him to a healthy and happy state of mind by dint of emotional rustic evangelism:

I hoped he might witness, in the society of the Wanderer, some religious ceremony—a sacrament, say, in the open fields, or a preaching among the mountains—which, by recalling to his mind the days of his early childhood, when he had been present on such occasions in company with his parents and nearest kindred, might have dissolved his heart into tenderness, and so have done more toward restoring the Christian faith in which he had been educated, and, with that, contentedness and even cheerfulness of mind, than all that the Wanderer and Pastor, by their several effusions and addresses, had been able to effect.⁶⁴

But whether the doughty champion of reason could have become as a little child and been guided by sentiment into the church militant, is extremely doubtful.

There have been few attempts to clear the memory of Fawcett of misconceptions fostered by *The Excursion* and the Fenwick note. In his famous review of *The Excursion* in the *Examiner* at the end of 1814, Hazlitt, while praising it highly as poetry, took exception to some of the animadversions upon the philosophy of the Solitary, particularly the Wanderer's attack upon Voltaire's *Candide*, the favorite book of the Solitary. In vindication, so Haz-

⁶⁴ Fenwick note to *The Excursion*.

litt's biographer, P. P. Howe, thinks, of the memory of Fawcett, Hazlitt makes a caustic comment⁶⁵ upon those who aided in the defeat of the aspirations of the revolutionary dawn for the future of society. In some parts of this passage there are oblique references to Wordsworth's own supposed flimsy-minded and hard-hearted apostasy, which saved him from such evil effects as the Solitary is represented to have suffered. If Howe's conjecture be correct, it is a pity that Hazlitt was not alive in 1843 to defend the memory of the friend of his youth. Professor Harper, in the light of the Fenwick note, which he accepts in effect, writes that the poet "is unfair to the poor Solitary, and still more so to the Reverend Joseph Fawcett, his prototype."⁶⁶ In the bland assumption that with the shattering of his hopes for society the Solitary's inner moral defenses gave way, Wordsworth, as his biographer has said, makes the Solitary a man of straw, setting him up with a nefarious doctrine and knocking him down with the torrential dialectic of optimism. Professor Harper, in assembling from several sources what scant information left by others is available about Fawcett, has failed to find anything to support the report which Wordsworth received of his moral degeneration:

A patient search has failed to discover anything derogatory to his character, and the gossip about him which Wordsworth heard is only an instance of the way in which men's reputations were assailed by those who took for granted that heterodox opinions must of necessity spring from a wicked heart and end in an evil life.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ See P. P. Howe, *op. cit.*, 175.—Howe assumes that Hazlitt recognized Fawcett's portrait in the Solitary.

⁶⁶ George McLean Harper, *op. cit.*, II, 228.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 261-262.

But no one seems to have looked into Fawcett's own writings published after 1795 for evidence about the tenor of his later life. This it is proposed, finally, to do. While the persistence of the elegiac note in his poetry indicates a man who oftentimes heard "the still, sad music of humanity," he writes always of others' calamities, not of his own. So far as his poetry shows—and this is the main record he has left us of his retirement—he did not become a misanthropist and gloomy solitary. In the poem "Solitude," which certainly does not appear to have been conjured up to serve a mere poetic occasion, after commanding solitude as a refuge from the folly and noise and tinsel show of the world, he goes on:

Yet not the face of lov'd mankind I fly;
Yet not to cloisters, nor to caves I go;
In mean inglorious indolence to lie,
No more to bind the bleeding heart of Woe.

No sour misanthropy this bosom steels;
No spleen has o'er it flung its ugly stain:
Long has it felt and still it deeply feels,
The social pleasure and the social pain.

Ne'er, Nature, let me take my sullen flight
From the sweet duties of the social sphere:
Ne'er, Misery, let be banish from my sight,
While I can wipe it off, thy piteous tear.

And sweet as is the light lone Reason pours,
And sweet though Fancy's airy ramblings be,
Ill can I brook to lose the golden hours,
Immortal friendship, that are crowned by thee.⁶⁸

In the elegies, "On the Loss of Friends" and "Mortality and Hope," there is none of the Solitary's indifference toward or disbelief in immortality, nothing of his theory of blind force against intelligently directed power:

Is living soul but one fleet moment lent?
And that which beats and thinks in humankind,
But dust whose wild and casual ferment
Shoots into fits of life and starts of mind? . . .

Are these but works of blindly laboring clay,
Wrought up, by chance, to reason's glorious light,
That, kindling to a flash of mental day,
With quick extinction, die again to night?

It is not so: they cannot be extinct:
Such sacred essence ne'er can sink to nought:
Who boasts the power on moral themes to think
O'er moral themes shall roll immortal thought.⁶⁹

There is something, on the other hand, of the Wanderer's own belief in a just and superintending Providence:

To him who, thus, in life's approaching close,
Is doomed his mournful prospect to extend,
Ah, sure, in justice, equal Nature owes
A life where Foresight shall descry no end.⁷⁰

Unlike the Solitary, who sees life only as a lengthening tragedy with its end in "the senseless grave" and who believes in ruthless destiny, Fawcett, in the poem called "Change," is sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust in the moral government of the universe and in the happy destiny of man:

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

In Nature's beauteous frame, as cold and heat,
 And moist and dry, and light and darkness meet;
 Harmonious, in the moral system, join
 Pleasure and pain, and glory and decline . . .

Hail, radiant ages! hail, and haste along!
 To reasoning man your splendid years belong!
 Unclose your leaves of true, unfabled gold,
 That hidden lie in Fate's rich volume roll'd!
 Not Fancy, Faith the Muse this vision gave; . . .
 Truth's living coal hath lent her lips its fires:
 Of moral science, lamp to love and peace,
 The lucent crescent shines, whose bright increase
 Shall lose its horns in plentitude of light.⁷¹

But there are bits of autobiographic data scattered through the various prose introductions to his poems which have no veil of poetry thrown over them and which make it unmistakably clear that in his later days he was neither a cynic afflicted with a sort of moral headache caused by the intoxication of the Revolution nor a mourner over its immediate outcome whose grief reached pathological proportions. In the advertisement to *The Art of Poetry*, in which he speaks of himself under the pseudonym of Sir Simon Swan, he writes of "the polite studies that . . . afford a serene and elegant delight to the evening of his days."⁷² Here "the evening of his days" is a part of the fiction, as he was then only thirty-nine years old. These are the days about which Hazlitt writes. In only one place does Fawcett say anything of a direct character about the frustration of his revolutionary

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 97, 101.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 255.

hopes, and here there is no melancholy brooding. In the advertisement to his "Ode on the Commemoration of the French Revolution," he writes that he is singing in 1798 of the unsullied hopes of the Revolution in 1792, "when the friend of humanity . . . as little suspected that its [the French nation's] honor was to be stained by members of its own, as that its cause was to be opposed by a people which has long insulted the slavery of Europe by the loudness of its boasts of freedom."⁷³ The point here is that he could still look back with rapture beyond "the transactions by which the cause of liberty in France was . . . disgraced" to the earlier days of his "unmoderated admiration."

Finally, we know that he did not lose his serene confidence in the attainment of that peace on earth which comes from good-will towards men. On April 2, 1802, less than two years before his death, in the advertisement to his *War Elegies*, his spirit was right manfully bearing onward. Here is nothing of the Solitary's hopelessness for mankind. He seems still a young man seeing visions; the impulse which came from the hope for a regeneration through reason and universal benevolence is still fresh within him. To an era like ours reaping the fruits of war his words come with a peculiar sanity and tonic power.

In these days of fashionable despair of the final amendment of human manners, I am not ashamed to own myself of the number of those reputed enthusiasts who look forward to fairer times. I am free to confess that my hopes as well as my wishes point to a state of peace, far other than any which has yet borne the beautiful name;

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 166.

which has indeed been little more than inactive war; an armed, although a quiet scene; a season of calm in a system of society containing all the materials of tempest and principles of storm; a motley picture, at variance with itself, of national civility and jealousy, rest and insecurity, amity and rivalship; of steel wiped from its slaughterous stain, but retaining its slaughterous shape; of arms put off by wearers only to be reposed in arsenals; of forts, whose thunder is hushed, but that still threaten in silence with frowning battlements; of fleets and armies ceasing from murderous action, but maintained in proud existence, and bearing the venerable name of ESTABLISHMENTS; and of garments no longer 'rolled in blood,' continuing to be worn, with undiminished ornament, as the gay badge of barbarous occupation. I contemplate in my prospect of futurity, a scene of peace, that shall exhibit to the satisfied friend of his species, not merely inactive, but exploded arms; a state in which swords shall be returned, not to the scabbard, but to the anvil; a peace, not born of negotiation and formality, ushered with noisy proclamation, and adorned with gaudy parade, but silently proceeding from attachment to human happiness, and abhorrence of human contention; a peace, whose security shall be the innocence of society, whose guarantee, the philanthropy of nations, and whose olive-branch, extended over the HEARTS of mankind, shall *realize* that eternity of its duration, which has hitherto been nothing more than an idle expletive in the language of treaties.⁷⁴

This passage, which seems to have been completely unnoticed, is so contradictory to the whole unfavorable impression Wordsworth has left of Fawcett as well as of

⁷⁴ *War Elegies*, pp. iii and iv of the advertisement.

Hazlitt's idea that his death was hastened by his disappointment over the Revolution, that I have quoted it for the sake of its eloquent clarification of his character. This, being the last thing he wrote of which there is any record, is his fitting epitaph. It is not the wail of a disillusioned dreamer in his misery dead.

CHAPTER VIII

GEORGE DYER AND ENGLISH RADICALISM

To see the gentle George Dyer placed among even the milder radicals will surprise those acquainted with him only as the friend of Charles Lamb (and there are few who know him otherwise),¹ for Lamb has immortalized him by dwelling almost exclusively upon the unconscious comedy of his outer life. The oddities of his character have likewise been the engrossing topic of his other friends and of those of our own time who have written about

1 See the following: Mary and Charles Cowden Clarke, *Recollections of Writers* (New York, 1878), pp. 11-13. *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Boston, 1895), I, 84, 93, 316-17, 363; II, 748-50. *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Earl Leslie Griggs (London, 1932), I, 21-2, 32-4, 102, 125. Barry Cornwall, *An Autobiographical Fragment* (Boston, 1877), pp. 77-80 and *Charles Lamb, A Memoir* (London, 1866), pp. 69-71. Joseph Cottle, *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey* (London, 1847), pp. 155-7. William Hazlitt, *On the Look of a Gentleman and On the Conversation of Authors*. Leigh Hunt, *Autobiography* (New York, 1850), I, 70. *Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, edited by E. V. Lucas (London, 1921), I, 33, 134-5, 176, 180-3, 186-9, 209-10, 218, 234-40, 309-10, 523-4, 530, 547-8; II, 673-4, 710, 741, 847, 864-5, 925-6, 942, 975. Charles Lamb, *Oxford in the Vacation and Amicus Redivivus. Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, edited by Thomas Sadler (Boston, 1869), I, 39-40, 239-40; II, 472, 519. *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, edited by J. W. Warner (London, 1856), I, 33, 335. T. N. Talfourd, *Final Memorials of Charles Lamb* (Philadelphia, 1855), pp. 250-2, 261-3. Orlo Williams, *Life and Letters of John Rickman* (Boston, 1912), pp. 7, 59, 82.

For modern accounts of Dyer see the following: E. V. Lucas, *Life of Charles Lamb* (London, 1921), Chapter XIV. Dudley Wright,

him.¹ The only recognition of George Dyer's extensive contribution to the liberal thought of his time which I have been able to find in all that has been written about him, is contained in a single sentence of the obituary notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for May 1841: "His kind heart most warmly sympathized at all times with the cause of civil and religious liberty, which he uniformly espoused by his writings, more especially by his work on *The Theory and Practice of Benevolence* and a treatise entitled *Complaints of the Poor*." } But this gives little idea of the range of his thinking. Lamb has explored his heart for us, but has left no adequate intellectual estimate of him. In fact, by his minute chronicling of Dyer's harmless foibles he has spoiled the perspective upon his work. There is not a line of appreciation in Lamb about his political and religious philosophy. To Lamb, George Dyer was primarily a queer specimen in the laboratory of human nature. And yet he undoubtedly loved him; he wrote that he never spoke of him "except *con amore*." Lamb's respect and even reverence for Dyer, it is true, have been often discounted because he so frequently made his friend the object of raillery, but his playfulness was always at the expense of the accidents, not of the essence, of Dyer's character. He was a convenient butt for good-natured ridicule and the tolerant object of some of the most delightful humour that has ever graced the English tongue. So perhaps more literature has been made about

"Charles Lamb and George Dyer," *English Review*, XXXIX, 390-7 (September 1924). G. A. Anderson, "Lamb and the Two G. D.'s," *London Mercury*, XI, 371-87 (February 1925). Edmund Blunden, "Elia's G. D.," *London Nation and Athenaeum*, XLIII, 138-9 (May 5, 1928). A. Edward Newton, *George Dyer* (1938), a privately printed brochure.

Dyer than he made himself. His many eccentricities are sauce to the bare facts of his uneventful life: his unassailable innocence, his amazing credulity, his bookishness, his absentmindedness, his slovenliness, his economy pushed to the point of denying himself proper nourishment, were sources of endless amusement to his friends and provided Lamb especially a constant temptation.

Lamb said that a biography of Dyer would be as interesting as any novel, and that he planned to put him in a novel if he outlived him. Strange to say, the biography has never been written. Even his autobiography, which in the blindness of his old age he dictated during the last seven years of his life, has been unfortunately lost, though there is an extract from it in the obituary sketch of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. So the records of his always laborious and generous-hearted and sometimes distinguished endeavors lie scattered in the lumber-rooms of literature. It is the hope of the author of this study, though he has had to accept the handicap of writing soberly about a man whose lack of humour was said to "amount to a positive endowment," to show that George Dyer was a respectable force in the progressive thought of his time and that, though he shines now in the reflected light of the genius of greater men who were his friends, the light of his own genius kept him, while living, from being obscured in contact with them.

Dyer's political and religious philosophy was steadied by the ballast of his great classical learning, in which, like his radical friend, Gilbert Wakefield, he was a marvel of industry. His works all have the air of serious scholarship. Lamb pays tribute to his "fine erudition." The simplicity upon which so many have remarked in-

volved no lack of knowledge but was limited to his personal relations, though his scholarship was multifarious rather than profound. Leigh Hunt calls him "an angel of the dusty bookstalls and of the British Museum." Hazlitt has left us an engaging portrait of him as an unworldly bibliophile:

He hangs like a film and cobweb upon letters, or is like the dust upon the outside of knowledge, which should not be too rudely brushed aside. He follows learning as its shadow, but as such he is respectable. He browzes on the husks and leaves of books. . . . The legend of good women is to him no fiction. When he steals from the twilight of his cell, the scene breaks upon him like an illuminated missal, and all the people he sees are but so many figures in a *camera obscura*. . . . His mind cannot take the impression of vice; but the gentleness of his nature turns gall to milk. . . . He draws the picture of mankind from the guileless simplicity of his own heart.²

Much of what Dyer wrote is buried under anonymity in the mere projects of booksellers or in such magazines as the *Analytical Review*, the *Critical Review*, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and the *Monthly Magazine*. Circumstances condemned him to much hard literary labour without inspiration and left the blight of dullness upon much of his literary output. || However, when dealing with subjects in which his convictions were enlisted, like most of the great public questions of the early period of the French Revolution, he wrote with vigour and perspicuity and often with grace.|| And he never reached the

2 "On Conversations with Authors," *Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, edited by Waller and Glover (London, 1902-6), VII, 43-4.

borders of rant. Upon matters of political and religious controversy he seemed to feel, like Godwin, what Wordsworth has called "the central calm subsisting at the heart of endless agitation." In fact, few men have delivered themselves of radical ideas with more soberness.¹ As a writer in the *Monthly Review* notes, his use of obsolete phrases gives his prose "the air of an old sermon of the seventeenth century." But there is in his pages little of the unconsciously mirth-provoking qualities that sauced his conversation, and Lamb praised some of his prose.

Dyer's poetry naturally suffers more than his prose from the pervasive soberness of his nature. E. V. Lucas writes that it is "just so many sober words in metre." The epigram of Crabb Robinson's friend Reid was considered just by many:

The world all say, my gentle Dyer,
Thy odes do very much want fire.
Repair the fault, my gentle Dyer,
And throw thy odes into the fire.²

Lamb's ridicule of Dyer's critical pretensions and of his poetical discrimination has led to the complete neglect of his poetry and even to an imperfect knowledge of its extent.⁴ But Lamb's opinions themselves are to be discounted to some degree from the very fact that he himself was incapable of soberness and that he always so warmed

³ *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, I, 40.

⁴ Dudley Wright, for example, leaves the impression that he published only two volumes of poetry (*op. cit.*, p. 395). He published four. On George Dyer as a poet and critic, see *Letter of Charles and Mary Lamb*, edited by E. V. Lucas (New Haven, 1935), I, 141, 201, 205, 211-12, 217, 247; II, 242.

to his subject when he spoke of "G. D." that what went into him fact did not always come out truth. The denial to Dyer of a cultivated taste is not so well justified as the denial to him of imaginative vigour. Pegasus, it is true, generally "runs restive" with our poet. There can be little imaginative glow in poems full of borrowed sentiments conscientiously acknowledged in ubiquitous footnotes. But a careful reading of his essays published in *Poems*, 1802, on "representative," lyric, and elegiac poetry, indicates poverty neither of knowledge nor of discrimination. Unlike the average of his early contemporaries, he was no abject follower of Pope. He sometimes achieves the unaffected simplicity of Wordsworth's blank verse, and he is full of the humanitarian fervour of the early romantic poets.⁵

We now turn to pertinent facts about George Dyer's career, especially those of his association with the leaders of liberal thought!

The association of the name of Dyer with Lamb begins with their attendance at Christ's Hospital, which was the early intellectual nurse also of their friends Coleridge and Leigh Hunt. Through the kindness of "some charitable dissenting ladies" Dyer was sent to the famous charity school at nine. He stayed there twelve years and was for some time at the head with the rank of Grecian. But he had left long before Lamb entered in 1782, and had graduated in 1778 at Emmanuel College, Cambridge.⁶ Upon

⁵ Good examples of both these qualities will be found in his poem "To Mr. Arthur Aikin, on taking Leave of him after a Pedestrian Tour" (*Monthly Magazine*, V, 121-3, February 1798).

⁶ The mistaken impression was long received that Lamb and Dyer were schoolfellows at Christ's Hospital. It seems to have been origi-

taking his degree he submitted to subscription, though with misgivings sufficient, it is thought, to have caused him to be denied a fellowship. Soon afterward he was sent by the Baptist Fund in London as a pupil to the Rev. Robert Robinson in Cambridge, presumably to be trained for the dissenting ministry. Robinson, a brilliant man with whom Dyer had first become acquainted while an undergraduate and whose life he was later to write, was destined to run the whole gamut of dissent. Through Robinson's influence Dyer was led to Unitarianism and, it seems, to political free-thinking as well. Robinson was an admirer of Voltaire and Rousseau. About 1780 he founded the Cambridge branch of the Society for Constitutional Information, a society for political reform which was later very sympathetic toward French revolutionary principles. In this society Robinson preached civil and religious liberty, at the same time carrying his message to "a little society of dissenters at Oxford." Dyer, though he did not join the society, undoubtedly approved of its purpose. His political interest was probably stimulated about this time too through his acquaintanceship with the doughty political reformer, "Citizen" Earl

nally given by Lamb himself in a letter to Dyer 22 February 1831: "I don't know how it is, but I keep my rank in fancy still since schooldays. I can never forget that I was a deputy Grecian! And writing to you, or to Coleridge, besides affection, I feel a reverential deference as to Grecians still." Lamb, looking back upon Christ's Hospital forty-three years after, associates his deference as a deputy Grecian for Coleridge, who was a contemporary Grecian (Coleridge became a Grecian in 1788; Lamb left the school in 1789), with that for Dyer, who was a Grecian before Lamb was born. Talfourd confirmed the error by writing that Dyer "had attained the stately rank of Grecian in the venerable school of Christ's Hospital when Charles entered it" (*Op. cit.*, p. 261). Leslie Stephen repeated it after him in his article on Dyer in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Stanhope, in whose home he was for a while⁷ a tutor and who, upon his death in 1816, made Dyer, with Fox and others, one of his executors and left him a handsome legacy.¹

In 1781 Dyer tried preaching, serving a dissenting congregation at Oxford, probably the "little society" to which his friend Robinson had preached the gospel of liberty the year before. But he soon returned again to Cambridge, where he took residence among the fellows; attracted the attention of Priestley, Wakefield, and Mrs. Barbauld; and for the next ten years was one of that influential group of Cambridge Dissenters which for more than thirty years made a valiant fight for the removal of political and religious disabilities. Besides Robert Robinson, this group included at various times Robert Tyrwhitt, John Jebb, William Frend, Robert Hall, and Benjamin Flower.⁸ During the preceding twenty-five years the Dissenters had not without patience won a certain amount of respect at Cambridge.⁹ However, while

⁷ Just when is uncertain. The obituary notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine* states that he engaged in "private tutoring" before he entered the home of Robinson.

⁸ Dyer has left us interesting observations on the reforming activities of these men in the chapter on "Dissentients" of his *History of the University and Colleges of Cambridge, including Notices relating to the Founders and Eminent Men* (1814), I, 114-29, and in his *Privileges of the University of Cambridge* (1824), II, 99, 107.

⁹ Dyer tells us that in the beginning of Robinson's ministry in 1757 Dissenters were regarded as "degraded characters" at Cambridge. The undergraduates were given to interrupting the meetings of Dissenters about the town so much that one parish prosecuted the offenders. On one occasion about 1769 in St. Andrew's Church "prostitutes paraded the aisles in academic habits" (*Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Robert Robinson*, p. 72).

the atmosphere of Cambridge was in the 1780's more conducive to freedom of thought than that of Oxford (Oxford required subscription for entrance; Cambridge, for graduation), even there Dissenters were looked upon with suspicion and dislike.¹⁰ But Dyer was hopeful. He wrote of the period in 1793:

From the temper of the studies pursued at Cambridge as well as from the great degree of liberality possessed by many of its members, there were not wanting those who hoped a disposition might prevail there to rectify some of its more glaring impositions begotten originally by tyranny and nursed by weakness.¹⁰

Accordingly, in 1789 he threw himself into the then much accelerated agitation against all the disabilities of Dissenters with his *Inquiry into the Nature of Subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles*. Robinson and Capel Lofft drew up the plan of a college for Dissenters at Cambridge in which it was their desire that Dyer should become a tutor, but Robinson died in 1790 before it was realized.¹¹

After a short period of teaching at Southampton with the father of Charles Cowden Clark in 1791, Dyer, apparently seeking a wider field of intellectual endeavor,¹¹ went to London in the next year and in 1795 settled at Clifford's Inn, where, as Lamb puts it, "like a dove in an asp's nest" he lived "in calm and sinless peace" for the remaining forty-six years of his life.

¹⁰ *Complaints of the Poor People of England*, p. 94.

¹¹ For the circumstances of the severance of his connexion with the dissenting society at Cambridge, to most of whom his unitarianism and his political views seemed extreme, see appendix to the second edition of the *Inquiry*.

The main part of the record of these forty-six years will be found in his books. It has to do almost exclusively with adventures of the mind. His outward activity was practically narrowed to exertions on behalf of his friends, nearly all of whom were at one time or another closely identified with the forward-looking movements of the age. He became a member of the Chapter House Coffee Club, to which belonged many of the celebrities of the day. Before the campaign for the suppression of the revolutionary societies became so violent in 1792, he attended several of them and "almost constantly attended one of their committees formed by delegates from various societies."¹² In 1790 Gilbert Wakefield, his contemporary at Cambridge, came to teach in the dissenting college at Hackney, from which he loosed the tumult of his soul upon the government. They indulged together "some kindred likings and some kindred scorns" and when Wakefield's fanaticism brought the ire of officialdom down upon his head and sent him to prison in 1799, Dyer defended his friend's principles. After his expulsion from Cambridge in 1793, the reformer William Frend joined Dyer in London and continued to his death, only a few days before Dyer's, the close association begun at the university. As we shall see, Dyer's sympathy for men persecuted for opinion's sake in 1793 and 1794—Winterbotham, Muir, Palmer, Walker, Gerrald, Hodgson, Hardy, Tooke, Thelwall, Holcroft, Joyce—was openly expressed. The Rev. Thomas Fyshe Palmer was a particular friend of both Robinson and Dyer. Dyer was not afraid to speak of him in 1796 as "that honourable exile

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

now bearing his faithful testimony to truth at Botany Bay.¹³

"Of the young liberal intellectuals who were later to make literary history, the first Dyer came to know was Coleridge." "As a brother Grecian," writes E. H. Coleridge,¹⁴ he was introduced to Coleridge in 1794, . . . and probably through him became intimate with Lamb and Southey." Dyer favoured Coleridge's scheme of Pantisocracy and thought his friend Priestley, who had already sailed for America, would join it. While the young poet was rapturously dreaming of this Utopia and looking in London for a publisher for *The Fall of Robespierre* in the late summer of 1794, he was befriended by Dyer, who disposed of some of his "nonsense" to the booksellers. Dyer's benevolence was substantially shown again a few weeks later when he bought twenty-five copies of the poem himself, having found it "inconvenient to take fifty."¹⁵ Later in the year it is thought that Dyer

13 *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Robert Robinson*, p. 249. See also his *Account of New South Wales and State of the Convicts* and his preface to George Thompson's *Slavery and Famine, Punishments for Sedition*, both published in 1794, for his condemnation of the severity of recent sentences against radicals.

14 *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, II, 748 n.

15 *Ibid.*, I, 93. See also *ibid.*, I, 84 and *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by E. L. Griggs, I, 21-2. In a letter of early 1795 to Dyer, Coleridge exclaims: "God love you, my very dear Sir! I would that we could form a Pantisocracy in England and that you would be one of us" (*Ibid.*, I, 33). If this had come to pass, Coleridge would have undoubtedly tested Dyer's benevolence thoroughly. E. K. Chambers thinks that Dyer paid the sum of £80 to £90 to extricate the poet from the financial difficulties in which the demise of the *Watchman* left him in May 1796. (*Samuel Taylor Coleridge, A Biographical Study*, Oxford, 1938, pp. 56-7, 335.)

tried to obtain for him a tutorship in the Erskine family. He also generously commended Coleridge's *Conciones ad Populum*. Their friendship seems not to have been affected by Coleridge's later change of front in political and religious philosophy. On June 6, 1828, Coleridge wrote him an affectionate letter inviting him to tea along with Basil Montagu and addressing him in those terms of admiration which only Coleridge could use so well..

E. H. Coleridge's conjecture that it was through Coleridge that Dyer became intimately acquainted with Lamb and Southey seems a safe one. The first mention of Dyer in Lamb's letters is made in a letter to Coleridge, July 1, 1796, in which he speaks of Dyer's having "stanza'd" Horne Tooke "in one of the papers t'other day." Their common passion for books, though very differently expressed, no doubt had much to do in drawing them together. Their contact after 1800 became and continued frequent and steady. Dyer, who seems to have had a remarkable *entrée* to booksellers and publishers, cemented his friendships with young men wherever possible by gaining them recognition. He reviewed Lamb's works for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and in 1801 he obtained for him an introduction to the *Morning Chronicle*. In the preceding year he had obtained for Lamb's friend, John Rickman, to whom he had introduced Lamb, the editorship of the *Commercial, Agricultural, and Manufacturer's Magazine*.

There are few memorials of the friendship of Dyer and Southey, long as it was. Southey's headlong reaction from the revolutionary philosophy seems gradually to have taken him away from Dyer's circle. In 1797 he was made acquainted by Dyer with Mary Hays, then a con-

spicuous disciple of Godwin, and spoke deprecatingly of her ideas.¹⁶ Dyer's sketch of Southey in *Public Characters* for 1799-1800 stresses with a touch of impatience the volatile character of his opinions at the time and the manner of decision in which he expressed them: "Whatever his opinions may be for the time, he never conceals them, and is cautious that other people should not mistake them."¹⁷ The feeling of the later Southey about Dyer's political philosophy undoubtedly was in harmony with that expressed to him by his life-long and notoriously conservative friend Rickman in a facetious and depreciatory passage of a letter of August 5, 1802:

Dyer . . . has lately been profitably employed. . . .
He has been on Sir Francis Burdett's Committee,¹⁷ reckoning himself and Sir Francis allied because the said Sir Francis talked about the Bastille and G. D. wrote a book entitled the *Complaints of the Poor*.¹⁸

Crabb Robinson, who met Dyer in 1799 and who seems to have had a knack for being wherever there was good talk, was his occasional companion, especially after Dyer became blind, when he sometimes read for him on Sunday mornings. An entry in his diary for February 27, 1812, tells of a dinner at Thelwall's in company with Frend and Dyer. But Lamb's chambers in Inner Temple Lane,

¹⁶ P. 111.

¹⁷ This indicates that Dyer took an active part in Burdett's much contested election in 1802 to a seat in Parliament for Middlesex over Mainwaring. Dyer not only was in sympathy with Burdett's leadership in the campaign for parliamentary reform but he had been no doubt aroused by Mainwaring's strenuous resistance against the inquiry into prison abuses.

¹⁸ *Life and Letters of John Rickman*, edited by Orlo Williams, p. 82.

where he resided from 1809 to 1817, were the favourite rendezvous of George Dyer and his friends. Crabb Robinson writes of a party there—"a numerous and odd set they were, for the greater part interesting and amusing people"—on June 15, 1815, in which among others were Dyer, Barron Field, Captain and Martin Burney, Phillips the publisher, Hazlitt, Kirke White, John Collier, Charles Lloyd, and Basil Montagu, Talfourd has sketched Dyer among his friends in that unforgettable pen-picture¹⁹ of a typical Wednesday evening whist party at the Lamb's, when thoughts that wander through eternity were bandied up and down and the philosophy of social and political progress, then fallen upon evil days, was buoyed up to await the flood tide of fortune not to come until some fifteen or twenty years later.

We pass now to an analysis and estimate of that large part of Dyer's writings which links him with the revolutionary tradition.

An Inquiry into the Nature of Subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles was the first of Dyer's publications. It was originally issued in pamphlet form in 1789, but was not advertised for sale and was circulated only among a few friends. In the first edition he did not even allude to affairs in France, since they were then "suspended on the edge of contingencies." The second edition, "corrected, altered and much enlarged," came from the press of the radical bookseller Joseph Johnson in 1792. It is a book of 439 pages which, in the words of a reviewer in the *Monthly Review*,²⁰ "exposes, perhaps more fully than any former publication has done, the apprehended absurdities

¹⁹ *Final Memorials of Charles Lamb*, pp. 250-4.

²⁰ X, 77 (January 1793).

and mischiefs attending religious tests."²¹ It was, in fact, the culmination of the arguments in support of the proposal for the repeal of the obnoxious Corporation and Test Acts, the long fight against which had been given an extraordinary impetus during the early period of the French Revolution.¹ He tells us in the preface that he had planned to make further "copious remarks" on the part of Burke's *Reflections* connected with his subject, but that he had desisted, "recollecting . . . that as he had been sufficiently confuted on the subject of French politics by Mr. Paine and since by Mr. Christie and Mr. Mackintosh, he had also been ably replied to on those matters which took my attention by Dr. Priestley and others."²² So he dismisses Burke as "a writer whose flashy rather than correct style has gained him some admirers, but whose principles are approved by few who have no interest in being deceived."²² The book, however, is multifarious enough in its range of subject-matter. All the political and religious ramifications of subscription are traced. Its style is marked by diffuse eloquence rather than by close logic. But the weight of Dyer's learning is carried with more grace and spirit than he usually shows.

21 Thomas Christie's *Letters on the French Revolution*, James Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae*, and Joseph Priestley's *Letters to Burke* were, next to Paine's *Rights of Man*, all of which had been published in the early months of 1791, the most vigorous and able of the scores of answers to Burke's *Reflections*.

22 P. vii of the preface of the second edition. All the quotations from the *Inquiry* are taken from this edition. To Burke's contemptuous reference to the "intriguing philosophers" and "theological politicians" among the Dissenters Dyer retorts: "If under such a government as that of England, there were not among the Dissenters men of the above description, Dissenters would be contemptible pietists, dreaming monks, spiritless slaves, or unmanly sycophants" (p. 287).

In the four parts of the *Inquiry* he condemns subscription as inconsistent with natural rights, with the free exercise of the intellectual powers, with the principles of the British constitution, and with the doctrines of Christianity, respectively. We are here primarily concerned with the first two.

Dyer's conception of natural rights is little related to Rousseau's.²³ Dyer defines them as "claims arising out of our present situation, our mutual relation, and our common equality." He thus confuses Rousseau's natural and civil rights.²³ With Rousseau, natural rights do not arise from a civilized social condition or mutual relations but are anterior to the social state. According to Dyer, government protects civil rights and at the same time helps to preserve the true equality of the state of nature. Rousseau would not have subscribed to such a statement as this: "As the wants of mankind are the foundation of society and as society gives birth to government, government is dictated by nature." Natural rights, Dyer tells his readers, are determined, not by a blanket fiat of our Creator, but by "the soil where ye received your origin." The natural rights of the enlightened Englishman will, then, admit him to higher privileges than those of an American Indian or of a Chinese, though the rights of the Englishman are not more real.

Among these natural rights which religious tests deny are the right to occupy offices of public trust, the right to educate children on any national endowment, the right to publish opinion, and the right to the free use of reason especially in regard to religion. Such rights have a pri-

²³ Cf. Joel Barlow's idea that "a perfect state of society is a perfect state of nature."

ority over systems of law and religion: "As there is a primitive reason from whence proceed those relations which constitute law, there are also rights prior to any form of religion which are the foundation of liberty."²⁴ Therefore, any scheme of religion which deprives men of them is to be condemned.

Considering the education of youth as a natural right, Dyer launches into an attack upon the aristocratic element and intolerance in the universities. His respect for man is stronger than his regard for the society of scholars. He hopefully looks forward to the establishment of national education, which will follow the revolution in the principles of education introduced by "the spirit of modern politics."¹ He hails the establishment of the dissenting college at Hackney as a move toward this liberation of education. The comprehensive scheme of his educational toleration takes in even the Jews, whose admission to the universities he advocates. The statutes of the medieval founders of the universities, where they involve intolerance toward the Dissenters, must "submit to an interpretation which the age can bear."¹

To the objection that the state must have "a just and permanent security," Dyer replies that government provides its own security by guarding the social compact and that mutual consent establishes the principles according to which just government is regulated. Like all revolutionary thinkers, he pitches his plea against subscription above the level of little groups of opinionative men upon the immovable basis of first principles:

24 Pp. 16, 13, 14, 19-22, 45. The references to the quotations above are given in the order of the quotations, since they relate to the same general theme. The same is true of the grouped references which follow.

These reasonings which plead the cause of mankind are not the partial arguments of a dissenter against a churchman . . . , but the unsophisticating and, I think, the unanswerable plea of human nature against every domineering influence. For I am very much mistaken if there be not a secret corner in the human heart, where sophistry cannot enter, into which, would we condescend to look, . . . subscription . . . will appear abhorrent from the first principles of natural justice and of common benevolence.²⁵

In his examination of the inconsistency between subscription and the powers of the human mind, he accepts the Hartleian refinement of Locke's sensationalism, though, as we shall see, he seems to baulk at the system of materialism towards which it leads. One corollary of sensationalism which he fully accepts is disbelief in mysteries. We can have no ideas about things concealed from us. To ask one to believe such incomprehensible mysteries as consubstantiation and transubstantiation, or even original sin, the trinity, and grace, by laying aside the reason, is like asking one to see without eyesight. Faith can result only from evidence. Moreover, mystery itself is too often the cloak of knavery. As the path to political salvation is less complicated than lawyers make it seem, so the path to heaven is plainer than theologians make it appear. Again, following the sensationalists, Dyer does not admit free-will "in the philosophical sense." Accepting the idea that "the mind is the effect of the organization of matter," he believes that "the will follows irresistibly and necessarily the most powerful impressions." But the darker implications of the ideas of

• 25 Pp. 60-1.

predestination and election yield to those of infinite benevolence. He thinks that "the grace of God will at length prevail over all, it being impossible that infinite benevolence should be defeated of its own gracious intentions."²⁶ Hence all will eventually be "made happy in God." All are predestined to salvation: how could universal benevolence decree otherwise?

So much for Dyer's theory of the operations of the mind and the control of destiny. What about the relations between subscription and intellectual integrity? It is impossible for the average man to subscribe with integrity to the truth of thirty-nine propositions, involving metaphysical distinctions, all the leading church doctrines held since the establishment of Christianity, and all the multifarious matters of church ceremony and faith on which the church has legislated. "Such articles," he declares moreover, "will become standards to which we shall appeal as oracles of truth rather than guides to help us in our inquiries after it."²⁷ The variety of the human understanding, which becomes more and more evident with intellectual improvement, is irreconcilable with the uniformity of faith imposed by subscription.

Of the primacy of reason Dyer is an uncompromising advocate! He is convinced that all propositions to which people are asked to subscribe should be pursued to "self-evident truths or the principles of common sense," and that otherwise they are not binding. If revelation counteracts the principles of reason, he can hardly be convinced that it is divine. "If our establishments or even

²⁶ P. 330.

²⁷ P. 70.

Christianity itself throw impediments in the way of the human understanding, . . . I shall not scruple to give them all up." True intellectual freedom and a reverence for the understanding, then, will not endure any kind of subscription.

Subscription to any articles cannot be justified on any principle of reason; whatever be their number and wherever they be fabricated, . . . all alike tend to enslave the understanding and to retard the progress of truth.²⁸

On historical grounds Dyer denies that the clergy are represented in Parliament as an ecclesiastical body and that the church is an essential part of the English constitution.¹ Parliamentary assemblies of the clergy have their origin in the accumulation of large temporal possessions by the bishops and clergy from the people in payment for spiritual services. Under William the Conqueror the tenures of the clergy underwent the same changes as the tenures of the nobles; that is, they have been held since "by barony," not "in free alms." Hence the bishops sit in the House of Lords as barons rather than as representatives of the clergy, and the clergy as an organized ecclesiastical body are not only no estate in Parliament but are not represented except in common with the laity, who are freeholders. This reasoning denies the bishops the presumption that they have the power to speak or legislate for the rank and file of the church. The church is no primary part of the English constitution; for the fundamental maxims of the English government are antecedent to the establishment just as the natural rights of mankind,

which the fundamental maxims of the English government express, are "antecedent to any particular regimen of religion." There is nothing in the constitution, therefore, to render the union of church and state indissoluble.¹

But more revealing of the real nature of Dyer's thinking in the *Inquiry* than such scholarly historical arguments are the frequently startling revolutionary sentiments which light up the sober colouring of his dispassionate pages and which he shares with the more outright contemporary radicals and agitators.

In his private convictions he went along quite a distance with his more explosive friend Wakefield. He professed the same personal aversion to public worship and believed that it gave a bias to religious inquiry. However, he does not go the length of Wakefield in contending that social worship is incompatible with the Christian religion. He commends Wakefield's and Geddes's translations of the New Testament as liberal yet accurate versions, which, unlike the King James version, do not "give countenance to the claims of high church authority" or "follow the expectations of a system."

His speculative ideas on the lineage of absolute government and on the sovereignty of the people show the influence of the bold mind and trenchant pen of Thomas Paine.¹ "All monarchies, properly so called," Dyer declares, "originated in violence or corruption and their continuance depends upon the same principles which gave them their existence."²⁹ The sovereignty of the people makes the monarch "a public functionary only," and the divinity which hedges kings builds a sconce not only against the wall of heaven but against the very palladium of public liberty.¹

When Europeans speak of a sovereign lord, of a sacred majesty, of a defender of the faith, and the Lord's anointed, mankind are misled. The former term savours of conquest; the next of theological claims, the third of superstition, if not something worse; the last is the incense of priests to the pride of kings.³⁰

Here the sober temper of the inquirer gives way to the spleen of the agitator. In his ideas on hereditary legislators and the system of aristocracy, he alludes with approval to the *Rights of Man*, but they have more of the temperance of statement which makes it possible to reason with him than Paine's. He also cites Paine's and Joel Barlow's teachings about prelates and privileged orders; and he sees their ideas provoked by the inattention to distress, the tendency toward persecution, and the opposition to claims of conscience among the ruling classes. He sets up a hypothetical radical reformer behind whose downrightness he thinly conceals his own convictions. These words, for example, purport to be typical of the agitators, but the thoughts none the less are George Dyer's:

Prelates are by office enemies to liberty and obstacles to the progress of truth. . . . Prelacy is founded in error and perpetuated by worldly policy. . . . "Admit only the original unadulterated truth that all men are equal in their rights, and the foundation of everything is

30 P. 263. On the last point he quotes with approval Mrs. Catherine Macaulay, who at the time was pursuing radical ideas with as keen a mind and as irrepressible a vigour as Mary Wollstonecraft: "That the people might learn to kiss the rod of power with devotion and, becoming slaves by principle, learn to reverence the yoke, priests were instructed to teach speculative despotism and graft on religious affections systems of civil tyranny" (p. 438).

laid. To build the superstructure requires no effort but that of natural deduction."³¹

The most open instance of his alignment with the radicals then being suspected or hunted down by the government is his appending with approval in a long note the declaration of the revolutionary Society of United Irishmen at Dublin, signed by its notorious secretary Tandy. This declaration, Dyer writes, "presents a model worthy of imitation in England." In the same connexion he advocates the distribution of radical political pamphlets among "the lower ranks of people," including "cheap editions of Mr. Paine's *Rights of Man*." He also recommends to parents Locke's *Treatise on Education* and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In the latter he hails the advent of the rational woman. Finally, the revolutionary radical's contempt for the past and his belief in the perfectibility which enfranchised man will achieve in the future, when "reason has supplanted enthusiasm," are expressed with the true Godwinian temper:

Politics are capable of unknown degrees of improvement. Political wisdom is not wont to show itself in imitation, but . . . in rescuing truth from the rubbish of Gothic antiquity and political knavery. . . . The object in her eye is Man. . . . As present times come forward to her survey . . . , she sees liberty in the train while antiquity retires from her eye and vanishes in a point. Too well instructed to admire defects for their antiquity

31 Pp. 350-4. The last sentence is quoted from Barlow's *Address to the Privileged Orders*. Dyer accedes also to Barlow's quoted opinion that "the church in all ages . . . hath aimed to establish spiritualism on the ruins of civil order" (p. 400).

or to overlook improvement because incomplete, she advances with prudence yet with intrepidity, with humility yet with perseverance, with modesty yet with success. Happy to admit mistakes as well as to pursue discoveries, she yields without meanness and conquers without insolence; and thus never rests till she gains perfection. This, this is political wisdom.³²

Dyer's first volume of poems came from Johnson's press the same year as the revised and enlarged edition of the *Inquiry*.³³ It was a thin volume in pamphlet form, dedicated to William Frend to express his respect for him "as a man of letters and, what I value more, as a man of virtue and a friend to liberty." "Ode on Peace, written in Jesus College Garden" contains tributes to Tyrwhitt, Frend, and Wakefield—the Cambridge reformers, who as "steady friends of man" formed various generous plans for broadening liberty. An extensive portion of the "Ode on Liberty" is dedicated to such defenders of the French Revolution as John Jebb, Richard Price, Samuel Parr, John Aikin, Thomas Paine, Mary Hays, Helen Maria Williams, and Mary Wollstonecraft; and there are added long notes explaining in more detail their connexions with the cause of liberty. The stanza on Paine, written at the time when the *Rights of Man* was being acclaimed and condemned in such wholesale fashion, brought down upon the author the displeasure of the *Critical Review*.³³ |

The following year (1793) brought the publication of Dyer's *Complaints of the Poor People of England*. The spirit and purpose of this production had been anticipated in the preface to the *Inquiry*, where he describes himself

³² P. 254.

³³ See second series, VII, 270-2.

as more interested in and better fitted for humanizing the order of society by the peaceful penetration of political knowledge among "the outcasts of political society, the common people" than for more boldly "abashing venal statesmen and startling unfeeling oppressors." Again his title does not indicate the comprehensiveness of his book, which touches upon practically every matter of political agitation then stirring the country. Still, in a special way, it is a document instinct with humanitarian sentiment, a deep solicitude for the rights of the poor, and a sincere desire to lead them into a more abundant life. It is no speculative or doctrinaire performance, but a record of the observations and convictions of a man who has become as one of the poor to learn their problems and to appreciate their hardships. In spirit it is the most modern of all his productions.¹

The main defect of the English government from the point of view of the poor is the imperfect representation which denies them any share in the making of laws. Only about 12,000 people of a population of approximately 8,000,000 were eligible to vote for members of the House of Commons. The basis of representation had not been changed materially for more than a hundred years. The new growing industrial centres where the poor were concentrated were practically without representation, while the borough of Midhurst in Sussex, for example, though it had not then a single house, sent two members to parliament. Dyer fully outlines the consequences to the poor in tyranny and injustice. Responsibility for their ignorance is laid upon the government. Again he advocates a plan for national education, but calls it "a romantic idea." That the children of the rich and the

poor should be taught in the same schools was a bold opinion in 1793.¹ As Barlow had already pointed out in his *Advice to the Privileged Orders*, Dyer shows that the poor people are kept in ignorance of the laws largely by the fact that they are printed in the old German character, which few can read, and sold at such a price that few can afford to buy. | The tyranny of the game and penal laws, the extravagance of crown and church expenditure, and the ignoring of the rights of the poor in the administration of the army and navy, are dwelt upon—sometimes with high-spirited scorn, sometimes with deep indignation. To give to the poor the independence to which their rights as men entitle them, Dyer advocates the turning over of waste land to them and the establishment of life annuities according to a plan of Dr. Price. The abolition of certain oppressive feudal rights, such as primogeniture, which have survived into an age whose enlightened spirit they constantly violate, will also contribute to the reduction of poverty.¹

“An Address to the Friends of Liberty,” the title which Dyer gives to the fourth part of his book, is a bold protest against the government’s policy of suppression and a vigorous defence of the aims of the revolutionary societies. He declares his willingness to obey the laws in making which the majority have no share, but his inability to respect such a government. He asserts that the proclamations used to hamper the meeting of such organizations as the Constitutional and Corresponding societies are not laws, since they have not been ratified by Parliament. He denies that the societies have any designs on property, commanding Major Cartwright and Lord Daer for their solicitude, in forming some of the societies, about

the security of property. But he defends the suspected correspondence carried on by some of them with the French revolutionary bodies, since it was in response to the invitation of the National Assembly to give their advice about the new French constitution. He ends the book with a reaffirmation of his faith in the French Revolution: |

Yes, with few exceptions I approved and still approve the doctrines of the Rights of Man; and the French Revolution I contemplated and still contemplate as the most important era in the history of nations.³⁴

‘*A Dissertation on the Theory and Practice of Benevolence*, published in 1795, was intended as a sequel to the *Complaints of the Poor*. It is not in part, as the title might imply, a metaphysical examination of the origin of our moral feelings. It is primarily an attempt “unconnected with the science of casuistry” to stimulate the spirit of benevolence by presenting objects for which it may be exercised: charity schools, workhouses, and various relief societies. Surely George Dyer comes nearer than any of the thinkers of the day to personifying that “universal benevolence” of which the revolutionary philosophers so glibly talked.³⁵ At the same time he is

34 P. 84.

35 Lamb has left us, in his *Oxford in the Vacation*, an inimitable tribute to this all-embracing and selfless charity of his friend: “With G. D., to be absent from the body is sometimes (not to speak it profanely) to be present with the Lord. At the very time when personally encountering thee, he passes on with no recognition or, being stopped, starts like a thing surprised—at that moment, reader, he is on Mount Tabor or Parnassus or cosphered with Plato or with Harrington, framing “immortal commonwealths,” devising some plan of amelior-

careful not to suggest any radical interference with the system of property. In fact, he thinks benevolence must be relied upon to correct the inequalities and imperfections inseparable from the social state. Among the objects of benevolence proposed are the defendants in the state trials of 1794. Without their solicitation, he gives particular accounts of these sufferers in the cause of freedom. He is careful, however, to stress, not the political, but the moral point of view—"moral, not in regard to the justice or injustice of putting these persons on their trials nor to the principles or characters of the accusers, matters upon which he had his private opinions, but in regard to the inconveniences and losses sustained by the defendants."³⁸ Even the ordinarily unsympathetic *Critical Review* was moved by admiration of Dyer's "humane and sensible strictures" of the treatment of the men who had lately been indicted for treason and sedition.[†]

Dyer's liberality of mind made him peculiarly fit to write the life of Robert Robinson, whose spirit of eager inquiry early led his disciple to venture into the field of rational religion. *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Robert Robinson* was published in 1796. Dr. Parr and Wordsworth thought it one of the best biographies in English. It also had the distinction of being translated into German. The book is examined here primarily for its reflection of Dyer's more liberal ideas: there are many

ation to thy country or thy species—peradventure meditating some individual kindness or courtesy to be done to *thee thyself*, the returning consciousness of which made him to start at thy obtruded personal presence."

³⁸ *The Pamphleteer*, XIV, 75. The quotation is from a later printing of the *Dissertation* in *The Pamphleteer* for 1818 and 1819.

independent reflections on the spirit of the age and on ecclesiastical and political affairs.

(In the preface there is one of the most outright avowals of revolutionary ideas to be found in the whole range of Dyer's writings. The occasion, which seems rather incommensurate with the fervour of the philosophical comment which it engenders, is his decision not to use titles with the names of people in the *Memoirs*.)

The language of equality is adopted in this volume; it is the language of truth and soberness. . . . In my intercourse with society I conform to its language; but in publications, at least for such as I am responsible, I will abide by the language of equality. In the latter case I bear a testimony to liberty: in the former I leave the reader to smile at my inconsistency. But, to speak the truth, these titles present a caricature of man, while every inch of ground he treads on, . . . every propensity of the human heart, whether virtuous or vicious, proves the deception and mocks our pride. . . . France has emancipated mankind from these attempts at false greatness. By bursting the bars which imprison truth, she has aggrandized her species.³⁷

The plainness of his style in the book is largely explained by the fact that he is willing to appear "among writers as a native of Botany Bay."

Dyer's sympathy with Robinson's various political and religious heresies is implicit when not expressed. He writes with evident satisfaction of Robinson's Rousseauistic belief in the pristine purity of human nature and of his general approbation of the French Revolution.

The little respect Dyer shows for the *arcana* of political science would have pleased the subject of his biography also. 'Like Paine, Dyer thinks that government has been made a matter of mystery by designing men who have used religion to bolster tyranny and have thus obscured the plain path of public happiness by a "wilderness of turnpike gates.' His usual philosophic composure deserts him completely on this subject, and he writes as if he had just risen from a perusal of Paine:

There exists a class of lofty politicians by whom government is treated as priests treat religion, like a science too profound to be fathomed by common intellects or like a fabric too elegant and too sacred to be touched by the unclean, the unhallowed hands of the vulgar. The comprehension of political science, the arrangement and establishment of political institutions, are, according to these men appointed by a divine invisible agent and transferred to the administration of a transcendent personage, his vice-gerent in this lower world. To augment the splendour of this august character, inferior dignities are called in, enclosed with the bright emblazonry of hereditary greatness, and decorated with the exterior pomp of official magnificence. These sagacious speculators, like the ancient Epicureans who maintained that the liberty of the will flows from a right line out of a curve, reverse the interests and claims of a community, and become advocates of the crooked manoeuvrings of a few lucky spirits, fortunate by birth or blessed with affluence. In comparison with these politicians, how mere a novice was Aristotle! This philosopher did but resign the reins of government to such as nature had endowed with talents corresponding to the character of a governor. The other men possessed the holy oil by

which even fools were made Solomons. The doctrine of *Jus Divinum* established tyranny and slavery by a commission from heaven.³⁸

With little short of an implication of approval he quotes Paine's description of government as "an evil that the wickedness of mankind renders necessary" and seems to agree with Godwin in doubting its positive blessing. |

The year 1797 is marked by two attempts at verse satire. *The Poet's Fate*, a plea for a more liberal patronage of writers, is a rhymed dialogue between a neglected poet and his friend. Among the writers of radical tendency mentioned as ill repaid by the world for their exertions in its behalf are Parr, Aikin, Geddes, Frend, and Wakefield. | The following are two of several alternatives suggested by the despairing Muse:

Take poor repast;
For such as needs must learn to fast;
Take moderate exercise and keep upstairs;
When hungry smoke your pipe or say your prayers;
Or plough in learned pride the Atlantic main,
Join Pantisocracy's harmonious train;
Haste where young Love still spreads his brooding wings,
And freedom digs and ploughs and sings.

| In a note to the above Dyer compliments Southey and Coleridge for their "ardent love of liberty" and "the softer feelings of benevolence," and singles out Wordsworth, Lloyd, and Lamb for poetical distinction. | In the same year he published *An English Prologue and*

*Epilogue to the Latin Comedy of Ignoramus*³⁹ with a Preface and Notes relative to modern Times and Manners. In the epilogue there is one of his rare indulgences in personal satire. 'The lines on the established clergy are biting and offensive enough:—

Churchmen you think are *sacred*—be they so—
 Witchcraft was sacred some few years ago
 Should some fools, and fools are often grave,
 With solemn cant affect my soul to save;
 With cheeks as fat as brawn, as soft as down,
 With nothing reverend save the band and gown,
 With eyes so full they cannot hold a tear,
 And heads that never ached, except with beer;
 Whose slender knowledge tells them to obey,
 Dull idle souls who only preach and pray;
 Yes, I would claim as I have claimed before,
 As fair a right to laugh as you to snore.
 Peace on the Reverend head, however dull;
 Go, honest man, enjoy your empty skull.

These productions, in general, confirm, however, what might have been concluded otherwise—that George Dyer was constitutionally unfit to be a satirist. There was too much kindness in his nature for him to satirize often with great effectiveness. In its review of *The Poet's Fate*, the *Monthly Review*⁴⁰ observes:

If it be possible for a satirist to be void of a single particle of ill-will toward any man breathing, or for a

39 The comedy was written by George Ruggles to ridicule the pedantic and barbarous cant of lawyers and was acted for the first time at Cambridge in 1614. Dyer wrote the prologue for delivery at its presentation at Westminster School in 1794.

40 XX, 472 (August 1796).

complainant against the times to be perfectly satisfied with his own lot, we firmly believe the humble and benevolent George Dyer to be that man.

An Address to the People of Great Britain on the Doctrine of Libels and the Office of Juror is a pamphlet of 120 pages occasioned by the various prosecutions of radicals by the government for public libel but specifically by the charges brought against Gilbert Wakefield and his publisher Johnson in 1799.¹ Its publication, however, was delayed by Dyer's usual lack of promptness until after Wakefield's conviction and so did him no good. While, according to the title, it purports to deal with doctrines of law, its first concern is the persecution of opinion which the government was then carrying on. The most impassioned part is his appeal for a free press. It took courage to write this in 1799:

Some who admit that thought is free are backward to allow that man should be free to publish his thoughts. But who are the men who propagate this doctrine? . . . They are selfish and narrow divines, artful politicians, corrupt lawyers. . . . Shackle opinion, restrain the press—and what will you effect? You will give confidence to absurdity and degrade wisdom. The principle goes to throw such philosophers as Bacon and Locke into shade; to silence such moralists as Helvetius, Hume, and Rousseau; it would encourage babes to prattle and triflers to dogmatize.⁴¹

But public opinion was by this time too much inflamed against the radicals for many to listen to reason in their

⁴¹ Pp. 114-15.

defence. Even the *Monthly Review*⁴² was seized with concern, criticizing him for choosing the radical philosophers as the moralists to whom mankind is most indebted, especially "at this time and in this country," though it recommended the *Address* as "good reading." But the *Gentleman's Magazine* in its hostility threw amenities to the winds in this vicious and supercilious thrust:

As friends to this bold and disappointed writer, we see with concern that he is but too well versed in the *theory*, if not the *practice*, of libels. . . . To allow men to say what they please of each other . . . must finally lead to their doing what they please to each other. . . . No *honest* man in this country and in these times would wish to set himself as a rival of Voltaire and a propagator of opinions whose influence has been so severely felt.⁴³

The two volumes of *Poems*, published in 1802 and including four critical essays, are of a very miscellaneous character in both versification and subject-matter. There are lyrics, elegies, odes, occasional poems, anacreontics, and pieces of a philosophical cast. Some of them show a lively fancy, but it does not always free itself from the trammels of mere learning. His poetry here is more rarely made the vehicle of his liberal sympathies than in the former volumes. "On Visiting the Tomb of David Hume" is one of his many tributes of deep respect to the great sceptic:

⁴² XXIX, 87 (May 1799).

⁴³ LXIX, Part I, 320 (April 1799).

. . . sagacious moralist,
Whose lessons shine not only in thy works,
Thy life was moral; and may I condemn
The man of searching mind, who systems weighed
In judgment's nicer scale, and yielded not
His weight of faith, when he durst not believe.

"The Padlocked Lady," a long poem of thirty-three pages, is written in a happy vein for our poet, but signally fails to affect the reader at the emotional climax. { It treats of the restraints put on British liberty during the war with France. } The author represents himself as pursuing Freedom through the world under the conventional image of a fair woman, only at last to find her with her eyes bound by a golden bandage, her ears stopped to human cries,

While from her lips, to seal her tongue,
A vile, inglorious padlock hung.

The spirit of the larger patriotism is also breathed through the banalities of "The Citizen of the World."

{ By the beginning of the century it appears that practically all of Dyer's ideas which connect him with the revolutionary tradition had been written out. } He seems at this time to have entered upon that long era of "calm and sinless peace" about which Lamb writes and during which most of his time was given to various scholarly endeavours, to laborious but generally unimportant projects for the booksellers, to the amenities of a bibliophile, and to the social claims of Lamb's famous literary fraternity. In fact, the ineffectiveness of reform propaganda was so conclusively shown during the early years

of the century that few even of the most radical writers persisted.

In 1812 he published his *Four Letters on the English Constitution*, the last production of consequence as an expression of his political philosophy.¹ In this book he reviews, without abating a jot of his earlier convictions, his previously expressed opinions about the principle of divine right, the sovereignty of the people, the unrepresentative status of bishops in the House of Lords, the priority of the constitution to the establishment, the defects in representation, the evils of the Corporation and Test Acts, and the fundamental simplicity of good government. He commends the suppressed reform societies for their promotion of enlarged views of the representative system and their fight for the liberty of the press. Believing with Godwin that only arbitrary government can give permanence to error, Dyer is confident that with the establishment of an impartial administration of justice these societies will be restored to their former influence. He still does not hesitate to align himself openly with revolutionary political thinkers in some matters. For example, he accepts with little modification Paine's definition of a constitution as "a thing antecedent to government and laws," though he thinks Paine goes to ridiculous lengths in denying the existence of the English constitution altogether. But this is pure Paine:¹

Those principles which ought to govern societies of men are deducible only from our wants, and appeal to *that divine light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, the primitive reason: they are not difficult to ascertain nor difficult to be understood.

He writes with his old indignation of the *Reflections*, whose author pleaded "for power against liberty, for the usurpations of establishments against the laws of nature."⁴⁴

But for all the unadulterated radicalism of many of his ideas, George Dyer was generally very careful not to flout the English government on immediate questions of policy. The shades of speculation were more inviting to him than the platform of propaganda. Though he was intellectually hospitable toward the radical agitators, he shrank from much active participation in reform. He preferred, like Godwin, to manufacture the intellectual artillery for the radicals rather than to command a battery.

This outward caution meets us very frequently in the *Inquiry*. He does not openly advocate immediate disestablishment; in fact, he sometimes admits the expediency of an establishment. He is wary in letting his readers know just where he parts company with his intemperate friend Wakefield:

Mr. Wakefield's sentiments on the office of the civil magistrate and on the tendency of religious establishments are, I am persuaded, the same as mine; nor do I here mean to drop any reflections on the present ruling powers.⁴⁵

He is careful not to charge the government with the disorders against Dissenters at Birmingham in 1791; but he writes that he is "far from thinking they were not prompted by men who supposed themselves complying

⁴⁴ Pp. 121, 115. The quotations are taken from the third edition with additions, 1817.

⁴⁵ Preface of the *Inquiry*, p. xx.

with the wishes of government.”⁴⁶ At the conclusion of his discussion of the constitutional objections against subscription, he declares: “I am no political reformer, but an inquirer after truth.” He disclaims any resentment against “the persons of our governors.” He makes the admission, without being driven to it, that he has “to take shame that the hand that now writes against subscription has yet subscribed itself.”

In his other writings his circumspection can be clearly traced. Sometimes his outward discretion is in amusing contrast with his inner convictions. In a passage on titles from a communication on the peculiarities of Quakers to the *Monthly Magazine*, there is a studied and almost ludicrous effort to tread the narrow path between offence to the government and faithfulness to his own convictions:

Blackstone’s comparison of a particular *form of government* to a pyramid with a broad strong base and terminating at length in a point, has been much admired. It is elegant but it is sophistical, though the excellency of his form of government I neither affirm nor deny. The same comparison has been applied to *titles*, where the sophism is still more transparent. The proper way to expose it in both cases is to appeal to nations the most enlightened, to societies the best regulated, to families the most orderly and harmonious: to inquire into the origin of titles and to trace their effects. Of the French I say nothing.⁴⁷

46 P. 288. The house of Joseph Priestley with the most valuable laboratory in England was burned in these riots.

47 VI, 342 (November 1798).

In the *Address on Libels*, he is fearful lest he be thought in his defence of Wakefield "to arraign courts of justice" when his aim is "to interest the friend to humanity." Here also he tells us that, while he approves the purposes of the Constitutional Society, he "never had the honour of belonging to it." To escape the imputation of being a political undesirable, it appears that he was sometimes willing to thin his political philosophy down to the mildest kind of liberalism, as the following passage from a letter to Rickman in 1801 shows:

How dare you call me a railer at Governments! My opinion is, I think, both modest and *generous*, viz.: that some govern too much, and too much government, sooner or later, defeats its own purposes and brings on troubles. Rulers therefore . . . should understand that if their interest and the interest of the people are not the same, they are, so far, not standing on good and solid ground.⁴⁸

The growth of his caution during the revolutionary decade is shown in the abridged version of the "Ode on Liberty" included in the *Poems* of 1802.⁴⁹ The glowing passages on Paine and seven other contemporary radicals are omitted, while the tributes to Locke, Milton and Algernon Sidney are retained.⁵⁰ In the later version a prayer of the version of 1792 to Liberty to aid the counsels and fight the battles of France is made to refer to England: but the tribute to the Polish patriots under Kosciusko remains. At least, his radicalism was becoming more English and less French. He was, by 1802,

⁴⁸ Orlo Williams, *Life and Letters of John Rickman*, p. 59.

learning to moderate it more into conformity with the necessities of a prudential world. In "To an Enthusiast,"⁴⁹ he asks:

What avail, O man, fantastic flights?
Why muse ideal deeds,
Heedless of what is true?

George Dyer did not stand at Armageddon and battle for the radicalism of the revolutionary era, but in his writings he did hold aloft its banner in days when its adherents were without honour in their own country. The residuum of his radicalism, after the tests to which reaction against the French Revolution exposed it, comprised much more than the mere benevolence with which his name has been so exclusively associated. He deserves an honourable place in the traditions of English liberty. |

⁴⁹ *Poems*, 1802, I, 12.

CHAPTER IX

SAMUEL PARR, "THE WHIG JOHNSON"

DR. SAMUEL PARR has now come to be regarded as a literary behemoth, so great is the contrast between his present obscurity and the celebrity he enjoyed at the end of the eighteenth century. Few men at that time bulked larger than he in the multiplicity and variety of his contacts and in the breadth of his interests in the fields of literature, scholarship, and politics. The extensiveness of his correspondence and the catholicity of his friendships were nothing less than remarkable. Nearly one half of the British aristocracy and a multitude of men of radical democratic politics were listed among his correspondents. The 1336 pages of correspondence in his collected works include letters from three persons of royal blood, eight dukes, five marquises, twenty-seven earls, fourteen viscounts, thirty-two barons, fifty-four lords, three duchesses, four countesses, two viscountesses, seventeen baronesses, seventy-five members of Parliament, ten judges, four archbishops, forty-one bishops, nine deans, eleven archdeacons, three hundred forty-eight other clergymen, sixty-three physicians, and 1335 of the file of society! Among the men of liberal ideas with whom he was in more or less frequent communication were Fox, Sheridan, Erskine, Burdett, Romilly, Boothby, Adair, Bentham, Cartwright, Payne Knight, Jefferson, Mackintosh, Samuel Rogers, Rees, Jebb, Hall, Wakefield,

Priestley, Price, Frend, Lofft, Holcroft, Godwin, Gerrald, Basil Montagu, Merry, and Landor.¹

His great contemporaries held his powers in the highest estimation. Burke wrote of him in 1787 as "a man of most extensive and critical erudition . . . who would have held that rank when there were more who distinguished themselves in that line than we enjoy at present in any part of Europe."² Sidney Smith at the beginning of the century called him "the most learned man of his day." Walter Savage Landor at about the same time, in something of the spirit of hero worship, refers to him as "the most elegant and energetic of our writers."³ In 1828, three years after his death, two sympathetic memoirs⁴ of little literary distinction and a nondescript collection of notes⁵ on his life appeared. But their principal impress upon English literature has been made through the unfortunate agency of one of De Quincey's most exasperatingly prejudiced yet admirably written essays,⁶ which has done for Dr. Parr as bad a service as Macaulay

¹ *The Works of Samuel Parr, LL.D., with Memoirs of His Life and Writings*, by John Johnstone (London, 1828), I, 200.

² John Forster, *Walter Savage Landor* (Boston, 1869), p. 98.

³ The one comprises the first of the eight volumes of his collected works, edited by John Johnstone. The other is a work in two volumes by the Rev. William Field and entitled *Memoir of the Life, Writings and Opinions of the Rev. Samuel Parr, LL.D.* Though the author had access to less material, his work is better done than Johnstone's.

⁴ *Parriana, or Notices of the Rev. Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, compiled by E. H. Barker.

⁵ "Dr. Parr, or Whiggism in its Relations to Literature," originally published in Blackwood's Magazine for January, February, May, and June of 1831, under the title, "Dr. Parr and His Contemporaries," and purporting to be a review of the above three books.

did for Boswell. De Quincey's account, faithful as it is to fact, shows more maliciousness than honesty in its presentation. Commendable though it may be as a specimen of his literary style, it is vitiated by his red-hot Tory prejudices, which issue in a continuous hiss of cynicism. In his judgment of Dr. Parr's political and religious liberalism, De Quincey is thoroughly partisan and he has not hesitated to use Dr. Parr's personal foibles to obscure the finer qualities of his character, the repeated declarations that he loves him for noble qualities of heart seeming rather adventitious in a work which he was moved to write by a sovereign contempt for his ideas. He brands Parr's biographers, Johnstone and Field, as "bigots who serve their superstition in varnishing their idol"⁶ and then proceeds to give a far more bigoted exhibition of opinion than either. In the face of such an array of noble correspondents as indicated above, De Quincey makes himself ridiculous by representing Dr. Parr as intimately hobnobbing with "the whole orchestra of rebels, incendiaries, state criminals, . . . traitors, and conspirators."⁷ Surely in the extent of Dr. Parr's associations there were more occasions for developing breadth of mind and an enlightened attitude on public questions than in the narrow circle of intolerant Toryism in which De Quincey then moved. Dr. Parr's career, especially as mirrored in his political writings, still awaits a truer interpretation.

As a man of letters, Dr. Parr has shown in his work that combination of literature and politics so character-

⁶ *The Collected Works of Thomas De Quincey*, edited by David Masson (London, 1890), V, 22.

⁷ *Ibid.*, V, 66.

istic of much of the best writing of the late eighteenth century.¹ To use one of De Quincey's few unprejudiced sentences: "Politics and literature so naturally blended in Dr. Parr's practice of authorship that perhaps not one of his most scholarlike performances but is richly interveined with political allusions and sarcasms, nor again one of those most professedly political which did not often turn aside to gather flowers from the fields of the Muses, or herbs of 'medicinal power' from the gardens of philosophy."² The most tangible part of his career and the most attractive part of his writing have to do with his political interests. Unlike most of the liberals at the end of the century, he belonged to the English rather than to the French political tradition, deriving his political philosophy rather through the English line of practical reformers, such as Wilkes, Tooke, Jebb, Price, and Priestley, than through the French Encyclopaedists, Paine, and Godwin, notwithstanding his close friendship with the last.³ In spite of his admiration for the French Revolution, he never preached pure revolutionary doctrine. With Tooke, he felt that, if his friends wished in the work of improving the government to go as far as Windsor, he would ask to be set down at Hounslow. In 1795 one of his friends referred to him as "a half-sansculotte." Even De Quincey abates his invective long enough to admit that Dr. Parr did not "blazon" himself as an anarchist.⁴ He was a sort of adumbrated radical in the tendency of his political theory but, like Godwin, a staunch though extreme Whig in practice, and he belonged to no radical political societies. Like most

⁸ *Ibid.*, V, 79-80.

of the other members of this class, he deprecated the influence of Paine among the irresponsible elements only less earnestly than the anti-Jacobins themselves. But he received republicans and sat with them at their meals, contriving somehow not really to become defiled by them. Though he was roundly accused of Jacobinism by unscrupulous tools of party, he never relaxed his characteristic English caution and there is not a passage in his written works to substantiate the charge. On the other hand, liberal friends were wont to criticize him for being too politic in the expression of his convictions.

Dr. Parr's personality was of that dominating kind which bore down the weak before it and aroused firmer natures to an intellectual tenseness and often to most stubborn opposition. Physically, except for his massive and coarse features, he was not a Dr. Johnson. However, he was square and athletic and there was a good deal of suppressed pugnacity in his make-up. His eyebrows' shaggy curtain with his cumbrous mould of head accentuated this impression. It was said that in his youth he delighted to show his strength by slaughtering oxen. As a schoolmaster he was a staunch believer in flogging. According to De Quincey, Dr. Parr had an idea that his eye was peculiarly searching and disconcerting. "I inflicted my eye upon him," was the phrase he employed in expressing the use of its "basilisk function."⁹ But the unworldliness of his nature and the undoubted simplicity and kindness of his heart (De Quincey even allows him this) more than counterbalanced his foolish personal vanities. Landor's playful epitaph,¹⁰ presented to him in

⁹ *Ibid.*, V, 20.

¹⁰ See John Forster, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

1799, frankly puts the qualities of his mind and heart. His peculiarities in dress and manner, however, combined with his obnoxious political opinions, presented a wide front of attack to the more puny assailants of his character.

Among his contemporaries Parr was often spoken of as "the Whig Johnson." While the judgment of posterity has perhaps ranked him a little lower even than an Elisha to Dr. Johnson, Dr. Parr was by no means such a mere makeweight in the balance of political and religious opinion against the great Tory as De Quincey would have us to believe. It will perhaps make clearer the qualities and the influence of Dr. Parr's personality and the scope of his powers to measure him by Dr. Johnson. His personality, like Dr. Johnson's was deeply stamped upon the expression of his opinions,—especially his political opinions.

The personal relations of these two extraordinary men, in spite of their wide differences in political ideas, seem to have been uniformly pleasant. Field thinks that during Dr. Parr's residence at Harrow and Stanmore, where he taught from 1767 to 1777, interviews between them were frequent. His considerable correspondence with Charles Burney and Langton, Dr. Johnson's close friends, indicates an acquaintance between them which was well developed. Dr. Parr wrote in 1825 to Mr. Craddock:

For many years I spent a month's holidays in London and never failed to call upon Johnson. I was not only admitted but welcomed. I conversed with him upon numberless subjects of learning, politics, and common life.¹¹

In 1779 it was largely through the influence of Johnson that Parr was appointed to the headship of the Norwich Grammar School. Field tells of an interview between them in which the old Tory in the confidence of private talk seems to have expressed to Parr more liberal political ideas than was his wont with others:

On an occasion, being in private with Dr. Johnson as he loved to relate, the great principles of civil rights and liberties became the subject of discussion, when the advocate of arbitrary maxims of government avowed sentiments very different from those which he publicly maintained in his writings—such as are far more worthy of an enlightened philosopher and a free-born Englishman. Alluding to that conversation, Dr. Parr used to say, expressing himself in his own strong language, "If ever man talked rebelliously, that man was Sam Johnson . . . But," added he, with an arch leer and significant nod, "he was not then writing a book."¹²

Boswell has told us about only one meeting, which took place in 1780:

Having spent an evening at Mr. Langton's with the Rev. Dr. Parr, he was much pleased with the company of that learned gentleman; and he afterward said to Mr. Langton, "Sir, I am obliged to you for having asked me this evening. Parr is a fair man. I do not know when I have had an occasion of such free controversy. It is remarkable how much of a man's life may pass without meeting with any instance of this kind of open discussion."¹³

¹² *Memoir*, I, 160.

¹³ *Life of Samuel Johnson*, edited by G. Birkbeck Hill (Oxford, 1887), IV, 15.

Miss Seward has left an interesting story of this same meeting, which is perhaps inordinately coloured by her admiration for Dr. Parr's prowess :

The day is recorded in which they measured their lances as chieftains of the Whig and Tory party. Never, it is said, was known such intellectual gladiatorship . . . "I remember that interview well," said Dr. Parr—with great vehemence—when once reminded of it; "I gave him no quarter. The subject of our dispute was the liberty of the press. Dr. Johnson was very great. Whilst he was arguing I observed that he stamped. Upon this I stamped. Dr. Johnson said, 'Why did you stamp, Dr. Parr?'—I replied, 'Because you stamped; and I was resolved not to give you the advantage even of a *stamp* in the argument.'"¹⁴

Another instance of their intercourse is given by Barker as related by Parr to a friend :

Once, Sir, Sam and I had a vehement dispute upon that most difficult of all subjects, the origin of evil. It called forth all the powers of our minds. No two tigers ever grappled with more fury; but we never lost sight of good manners. There was no Boswell present to detail our conversation: Sir, he would not have understood it. And then, Sir, who do you think was the umpire between us? That fiend Horsley.¹⁵

Dr. Parr long contemplated writing the life of Johnson and actually compiled much of the material. He had no misgivings about his own competency to do it well: In 1825 he wrote :

¹⁴ *Letters of Anna Seward, 1784-1807*, edited by A. Constable Edinburgh, 1811.

¹⁵ *Parriana*, I, 321. Bishop Horsley was a staunch, indeed stiff-necked, defender of the establishment against freethinkers.

I traversed the whole compass of his understanding; and, by the acknowledgement of Burke and Reynolds, I distinctly understood the peculiar and transcendental properties of his mighty and virtuous mind. I intended to write his life; I laid by sixty or seventy books for the purpose of writing it in such a maner as would do no discredit to myself. In intended to spread my thoughts over two volumes quarto, and if I had filled three pages the rest would have followed. Often have I lamented my ill fortune in not building this monument to the fame of Johnson, and, let me not be accused of arrogance when I add, my own.¹⁶

The arrogance is perhaps too evident to allow him to escape the accusation. Parr seems, however, to have had as much a desire to shine in the reflected light of Dr. Johnson's greatness as in his own. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that his accounts of his intercourse with Johnson unfortunately support to some extent De Quincey's imputation of overweening self-conceit. At the same time, it is just as undoubtedly indicated that Johnson held him in wholesome respect, which much weakens De Quincey's effort to make the contrast disparaging to Parr. It is most likely that their common high regard for the principle of kingship and a corresponding embodiment of spiritual authority led Johnson in part to condone what he regarded as Parr's political and religious aberrations. And, after all, Parr's pretentiousness was more a manner of speech than an element of character. In sincerity and genuineness he was quite the equal of Dr. Johnson. De Quincey is exasperatingly unfair in ascribing his lack of preferment to his "pigheaded-

ness." Much as he was bitten by ambition, he never sacrificed his convictions to the desire for power. Johnson was much less prejudiced and certainly more charitable than De Quincey when he remarked that it was a pity that such a man and such a scholar as Parr should be a Whig. To those who dispensed the privileges of the Church, even Whiggism, not to speak of radicalism, was often confounded with atheism, deism, Socinianism, and all the other outcast bodies of religious opinion.

Though Parr had no Boswell, his talk was hardly comparable to that of his model. He had a more benevolent appearance and more agreeable features, but his comparative lack of physical bulk prevented his heavy artillery from becoming as effective as Dr. Johnson's. His imitation of Johnson's manner of speech was apparently a little too palpable to some advocates of a simple style as opposed to Johnsonian pedantry. Richard Sharp, for example, is reported to have laughed at Dr. Parr and another "strutting about in Johnson's bulky clothes, as if a couple of Liliputians had bought their great-coats at a rag-fair in Brobdingnag."¹⁷ One of the most striking bits of testimony to Parr's conversational powers as compared with those of Johnson is recorded by Miss Seward in a letter of 1792, which tells of a visit Dr. Parr had paid her:

I was prepared to expect extraordinary colloquial powers, but they exceeded every description I had received of them. He is styled the Johnson of the present day. In strength of thought, in promptness and plenteousness of allusion, in wit and humor, in that high-coloured elo-

¹⁷ P. W. Clayden, *The Early Life of Samuel Rogers* (Boston, 1887), 243.

quence which results from poetical imagination—there is a very striking similarity to the departed despot. That, when irritated, he can chastise with the same overwhelming force, I can believe; but, unprovoked, Dr. Parr is wholly free from the caustic acrimony of that splenetic being . . . Though his morning, noon, and evening pipe involved us in clouds of tobacco while he stayed, . . . they were gilded by perpetual vollies of wit and genius.¹⁸

Parr's biographers make it appear that he talked less to display his logical dexterity and more from conviction than Johnson. Johnstone writes with the bias of strong sympathies :

Parr was as eager for victory as Johnson, but his scimitar was never drawn or wielded against the truth . . . The wily sophist he was sure to expose—the frothy wrangler he was sure to overcome . . . Perhaps there is no instance in the records of learning in which a mighty mind scattered its stores with such prodigality as did Dr. Parr. What lighted his pipe would have been illumination enough for many an ordinary scholar.¹⁹

Sometimes, however, like Johnson, he seemed to be satisfied with a mere colloquial victory :

"Did you argue with him, Doctor?" (Speaking of a particular person.) "No, Sir, I never condescend to argue with him—I pour my whole pickle-salmon tub of invective upon his head at once,—I drown him."²⁰

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, III, 192.

¹⁹ *Memoirs*, p. 519.

²⁰ *Parriana*, I, 501.

James Montgomery, who met him at the house of Basil Montagu in 1808, was amazed at his fireside tyranny. Like Johnson, he had an inveterate antipathy toward pretenders:

Enthroned in intellectual might, he dreaded no rivalry; but . . . when ignorance presumed to teach, when dullness pretended to be wit, or folly domineered, . . . his ire was kindled and he inflicted unforgotten, unforgiven wounds upon the self-love of persons, who neither knew him nor themselves.²¹

But Parr's pompousness was undoubtedly weighted with less intellectual ballast than Johnson's. In native vigor of intellect, in imagination, and in the power to shape his thoughts in the forms of art, Johnson was much superior. But in variety, extent, and accuracy of acquired learning, as well as in a certain suppleness and generosity of mind which prevented him from falling subject to the superstitions, the prejudices, and the bigotry that often vitiated Johnson's intellectual powers, Parr may claim the precedence. "Parr, to use his accustomed formula, had Johnson's pomposity without his force of mind, Johnson's love of antithesis without his logical acuteness, and Johnson's roughness without his humour."²²

Parr's published writings like Johnson's, do not have the point of his personal sayings. The bulk of his literary accomplishments is certainly large enough, but even his

²¹ *Ibid.*, I, 134. The remarkable character of Parr's conversation is further borne out by Robert Landor and William Taylor of Norwich. See John Forster, *op. cit.*, p. 73 and Field's *Memoir*, II, 118-138.

²² Leslie Stephen, article on Parr in *Dictionary of National Biography*.

sympathetic biographers lament that he did not produce some great definitive work on a subject ample enough to tax his powers to the limit. He was a prodigious scholar but much of his time which might have been devoted to constructive scholarly effort, was dissipated in more or less petty literary quarrels. While in Latin scholarship only Porson among his contemporaries was his superior, he reached unquestioned literary pre-eminence only in writing monumental Latin epitaphs, one of his best known being that on Dr. Johnson. The final judgment of De Quincey on Parr's scholarship seems to be the least coloured by his personal aversion: "As a scholar he was brilliant; but he consumed his power in gladiatorial displays, and has left no adequate monument of his powers."²³

His style suffers principally from his failure to wear his learning lightly. His diction is extravagantly Latinized. Landor in commending the *Spital Sermon*, which is singularly free from this besetting weakness, delivered a tribute to Parr which would certainly sound ironical if applied to most of his writings:

I hope this noble work . . . will be effectual in making Englishmen write English. Our language is bruised, as it were, and swollen by the Latin.²⁴

Certainly when Parr is not writing on scholarly subjects his style often justifies the application of the remark about Holofernes, that he has been to a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps.

On Dr. Parr's style in general, De Quincey's severe criticism was very nearly deserved. That "most tor-

²³ *Op. cit.*, V, 128.

²⁴ John Forster, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

tuous circumgyration of periods" which issued from his "sonorous smithery of words, dark and pompous," put felicity out of his power; and his tendency to beat interminably at ideas after he had squeezed them dry of content does not make him very engaging reading. His habit of interlarding his sentences with quotations ("Quotation is my trade," he once wrote) from ancient writers and of writing long discursive notes and notes upon notes, makes his writings as a whole "a wilderness of turnpike gates" that often leaves the modern reader hopelessly bewildered.

Infinite work which doth so far extend
That few can study it to any end.

In general, Dr. Parr was a man of splendid talents, that is, of power in giving effect to his thoughts, but not of the finest understanding. The power of his thought was not sufficient to eradicate the impression of distention and inflation. His long periodic sentences are filled principally with sound, ingenious antitheses,²⁵ balanced cadences, and flourishing perorations. As with Dr. Johnson, it must have been much more interesting to listen to Dr. Parr than it is at present to read his more deliberate performances. His personal influence was much more notable than the intrinsic literary excellence of his work.

It is fair to observe, however, that the above strictures on Dr. Parr's style are applicable much more to his writings in the fields of theology and pure scholarship than to those in the fields of politics and political philosophy, which were more occasional in their nature and therefore

²⁵ For examples of such antitheses done to a turn, see *Works*, II, 523 and III, 358, 362.

less self-consciously composed. To this part of his writings and to the rôle he played in the eventful revolutionary years, we now turn more directly.

In the period before the French Revolution he had early set his political sails to the winds of ultra-Whig doctrine by voting for Wilkes in the Middlesex election of 1768. To support his declaration that the Revolution found Parr a Jacobin already, De Quincey uses the fact that he risked his life in voting for this "seditious agitator" and "demagogue."²⁶ In 1771 Parr accounted for the failure of his candidacy for the headmastership at Harrow by this expression of his independent political thinking. At Colchester, where he taught from 1777 to 1779, he showed his sympathies for the American colonies.²⁶ and cultivated the friendship of Bentham. At Norwich, where he next removed, in 1780 he preached his famous *First Discourse on Education* in advocacy of the extension of education to the poor. In the *Second Discourse*, preached in 1782, he condemned the tendency of the educational teachings of Rousseau and Mandeville toward the doctrine that education is more injurious than beneficial and declared strongly for the education of women.¹ In 1785 he removed to Hatton, Warwickshire, where he lived for the rest of his life and where until 1798 he conducted a school, which was then closed on account of the difficulties with which the violence of party spirit beset his work. His ambition for a bishopric had in the meantime been stifled when with the King's recovery from his illness, the Whigs lost their chance to come into power.

²⁶ Van Wyck Brooks, *The Flowering of New England* (New York, 1936, p. 82), tells how during a visit of the youthful George Ticknor and Edward Everett in their *wanderjahre* Dr. Parr remarked to his guests: "I was always glad that you beat us."

Parr first became conspicuous as a political writer in 1787.¹ In that year appeared his *Preface to Bellendenus*, written in elegant Latin and containing the dedication to Burke, North, and Fox, respectively, of his edition of the three books of the Scotch writer on Roman law, entitled *Bellendenus de Statu Orbis* (1615). This was his political manifesto. It contains elaborate encomiums upon Burke and Fox and presents an apology for North's part in prosecuting the war against America. It pays a glowing tribute to Sheridan and severely criticizes Pitt and his various friends, who are introduced under Latin names. The pamphlet drew Parr into the full stream of political life, commended him to Fox, who remained his close life-long friend, and won him a reputation for scholarship. In this first of his political writings, however, there is evident the caution which was later to prevent him from countenancing anything approaching pure democracy. He seriously questioned its value because of the tendency of the people to act with decision without knowing their motives, of their inexplicable attachments by which profigate characters are raised to positions of power, and of their susceptibility to the power of personality, whether with or without principle. "The common people," he writes, for instance, "are a kind of pipe which it becomes an orator to fill with his breath."²⁷

Dr. Parr's religious liberalism was of a piece with his political freethinking; he reluctantly laid any part of the old aside. Though fully convinced of the utility of the Establishment, he was mediatory in his theology "be-

²⁷ *Preface to Bellendenus*, translated by William Beloe (1788), p. 73.

tween dogmatism, which decides too much, and latitudinarianism, which confounds all distinctions."²⁸ Without going to Unitarianism, he minimized the element of mystery. While professing high regard for the Establishment, he deprecated the spirit of intolerance and the pride of opinion in the narrower orthodoxy.²⁹ De Quincey, with little show of reason except the ill grace with which Dr. Parr read before his congregations political proclamations which were contrary to his sense of justice, calls him a renegade Church of England man and denies that he had any reverence for the Establishment. As an agency of religion,³⁰ yes; as a tool of government, no.

His attitude towards the laws which established the disabilities of Dissenters was only gradually liberalized.³¹ Though from the beginning he never showed prejudice against the Dissenters, he refused to join in the agitation against subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles begun in 1772 by Dr. John Jebb at Cambridge, "because his plan grasped at too much in too short a time." His opinion about the Test Acts suffered many modifications:

In the early part of my life I thought the Test Act oppressive. But in the year 1782 I very carefully re-ex-

²⁸ *Works*, I, 692.

²⁹ See *ibid.*, III, 684-689.

³⁰ Like Dr. Johnson, Dr. Parr was intolerant of young scoffers at religion or, for that matter, of any one who darkened counsel by words without digested knowledge. He once said to his pupil Barker: "Sir, you are a young man; you have read much, thought little, and know nothing at all." *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson* (Boston, 1869), II, 78. See also *ibid.*, II, 4 and *Table Talk of Samuel Rogers* (London, 1856), p. 315.

amined the subject, and changed my opinion. In 1790 I strenuously opposed the attempt to procure a repeal.³¹

In a letter to his friend Homer in 1790, he speaks of the duty of the bishops to oppose the repeal of the Test Act and refers to this project and the abolition of the slave trade as "utopian schemes of liberty" and "all wrong." In the same year he took part in a meeting at Warwick to combat the influence of the meetings of the Dissenters and he approved its resolutions.³² At this time he was disposed, to use his own later words, "to wrap up the Church in the State mantle." By 1792 he had begun considerably to recant:

I cannot help indulging the comfortable hope that in the progress of intellectual and moral improvement religious animosities will at last subside, and that the restraints for which I have contended will no longer be thought necessary for the public safety.³³

The year 1793 finally brought a complete repudiation of the test:

Till the year 1793 I held the *principle* of a test, but avowed my disapprobation of a sacramental test, because it makes religion the stalking horse of politics; but on reading a work which is ascribed to Sergeant Heywood, who evidently was assisted by several enlightened Dissenters, I gave up the whole principle of a test.³⁴

³¹ *Works*, III, 214-215.

³² See *ibid.*, I, 346, 348-354.

³³ *Ibid.*, III, 215.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 664-665.

But Dr. Parr's heart gave him a latitude in association which his head was unwilling to grant him in theological doctrine:

He thought the Unitarians might be saved, but they must be *scorched* first. He delighted in drinking hob-a-nob with a man who was sure to be scorched before he could be fit company for him.³⁵

He numbered his friends among the Dissenters by the score. Among them was Robert Hall, great admirer of the French Revolution and a power in liberal thought at Cambridge. Dr. Parr zealously espoused with Coleridge the cause of William Frend, who was deprived of his fellowship at Cambridge on account of an attack upon the Established Church. In July, 1790, at the height of the agitation against the Test Acts, he was present at the ordination of his Dissenting friend and biographer Field at Warwick, on which occasion Priestley preached the sermon. Here he first met Priestley, and thus began a personal friendship which came very near resulting in an attack on Parr's residence at Hatton at the time of the Birmingham riots in 1791.

In approving the conduct of Priestley which led to his misfortunes, Parr stood alone among Church of England clergymen. In panic over the depredations of the Birmingham mob, he was alarmed into believing that his house was to be burnt, his books destroyed, and his family discomfited. During the period of the riots he sent his books to Oxford for safekeeping. Afterward he took advantage of every occasion to condemn any expressions

³⁵ *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, II, 432-433.

of reactionary fanaticism. At a public dinner he refused to respond to a "Church and King" toast in these words :

I will not drink that toast, nor will I suffer it to be given in my presence. It was the toast of Jacobites, and it is the yell of Incendiaries; It means a Church without a Gospel and a King above the Laws.³⁶

De Quincey says much about Parr's cries against criminal politics, but nothing of his allaying the intemperate spirit of the Dissenters the next year. In May, 1792, appeared his *Letter from Irenopolis*, which indicated that his passions had considerably cooled. It was written to dissuade the Dissenters at Birmingham from holding a dinner in celebration of the fall of the Bastille. Johnstone calls it "the calmest, the purest of all Dr. Parr's productions."³⁷ It was unlaboured and not tricked out to unconscionable length by quotations. Even Pitt praised it; so it was eminently sober. Parr paid a tribute to Priestley's character and decried bigotry. He summoned the Dissenters to a triumph not only over the prepossessions of their calumniators but over the excess of their own passions. He thought that they had the privilege of expressing their opinions fully, except in such a public way as would offend the well-meaning but prejudiced. He deplored the spread among the discontented and ignorant of Paine's tenets, most of which he thought were "vulgar and seditious."³⁸ And he urged

36 *Works*, I, 369.

37 *Memoirs*, 377.

38 *Works*, III, 322.

the Dissenters to consider the probability that their meeting would be associated, even by many well-informed men, with these tenets. The meeting was not held.

But Parr's political opinions at the time had been more fully and strikingly set forth in January of this year in *A Sequel to the Printed Paper lately circulated in Warwickshire by the Rev. Charles Curtis*.³⁹ This production was the outcome of a personal controversy with an apologist for the riots at Birmingham, to whom Parr erroneously attributed an anonymous letter of criticism sent to him. Parr's immediate purpose was to deliver a most indignant remonstrance on the Birmingham riots. He details the progress of his acquaintance with Priestley and defends his friendships with Dissenters. But his larger purpose was to answer his enemies, who, in the literary war which followed the rupture between Fox and Pitt and his own separation from the High Church party, had charged him with disloyalty and branded him as a Jacobin. The *Sequel* is instinct with his caution in practical politics, combined with a liberal sympathy for the politically oppressed:

39 It is published in the *Works* under the head of *Miscellaneous Remarks on Politics, Jurisprudence, Morals, and Religion*, with the purely controversial passages deleted. It is considerably encumbered with learning for an occasional pamphlet and drew Richard Cumberland's ridicule in his *Curtius Rescued from the Gulph*. Cumberland has recorded very modestly the method he used to match that of the respected but mistaken Dr. Parr: "I conceived that Dr. Parr had hit an unoffending gentleman too hard by launching a huge fragment of Greek at his defenseless head.... At one of my friend Dilly's literary dinners...the lot fell upon me to turn out against Ajax. I made as good a fight as I could, and rummaged my *Indexes* for quotations, which I crammed into my artillery as thick as grapeshot, and in mere sport fired them off against a rock as invulnerable as the armor of Achilles." (*Cumberland's Memoirs* (London, 1807), II, 226.)

Let no man infer that I am an advocate for latitudinarianism in the Church or a confederate with republicans in the state . . . I never would break down the fences of subordination, and, . . . detesting priestcraft and kingcraft under all disguises whatsoever and for all purposes whatsoever, I would sooner perish than lend my assistance to the abolition of priests and kings.—Qualify, say I, and improve; and, if there be real occasion, restrain; but destroy not.⁴⁰

His practical political objects were the reform of Parliament with a just attention to every kind of property; the revision of the poor, tithe, and excise laws; the mitigation of the penal laws; the regulation of the ecclesiastical courts; and more thorough attention to education.¶

His general praise in the *Sequel* of the spirit and accomplishments of the French Revolution is qualified by criticism of certain details. He thinks the Revolution was fully justified, though some of its fruit was poisonous. He expresses his unfeigned admiration for the Girondists, based upon the moderation of their policies. But he laments "the hopeless wreck of nobility" in France and the doing away with primogeniture, and he wishes "a more magnificent form of monarchy" than the French have adopted. He is certain, however, that "the public stock will be secured and enlarged" by the Revolution.

The most interesting part of the *Sequel* from the standpoints of both style and content is Dr. Parr's analysis of the three great contemporary estimates of the French Revolution in English literature: Burke's *Reflections*, Paine's *Rights of Man*, and Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gal-*

liae. His first opinion of the *Reflections* was vitiated by mere undiscerning admiration:

Upon the first perusal of Mr. Burke's book, I felt, like many other men, the magic force; and, like many other men, I was at last delivered from the delusions which had "cheated my reason" and borne me on from admiration to assent. But though the dazzling spell be now dissolved, I still remember with pleasure the gay and celestial visions, when my "mind in sweet madness was robbed of itself." I still look back with a mixture of pity and holy awe to the wizard himself, who having broken his wand in a start of phrensy, has shortened the term of his sorceries; and of drugs so potent to "bathe the spirits in delight" I must still acknowledge that many were culled from the choicest and "most virtuous plants" of Paradise itself.⁴¹

His differences in opinion are stated in a conciliatory spirit and with the utmost respect. He thinks that Burke has filled his French "calendar of villainy" rather indiscriminately. But he disagrees with him most openly about encouraging the combination of foreign powers against the French Assembly for the restoration of the monarchy. Even Barlow in *The Conspiracy of Kings* did not express his indignation more strongly.

He condemns Paine's theory of the rights of man as false, but, with Burke, he does not deny the existence of those rights. He is concerned, with Paine, about those "dreadful notes of preparation" which have lately been sounded by kings about the rights of kings." Even Paine's theories themselves are to be preferred to "the

41 *Ibid.*, III, 229.

counsels of those sanguinary fanatics" who would turn the sword of foreign powers against "Frenchmen contending with Frenchmen alone, upon French ground alone, about French rights, French laws, and French government alone." He finds convincing "the very able narrative . . . of the progress and circumstances of the revolution at Paris" which Paine's book gives. He deprecates Paine's crude attack on primogeniture and hereditary monarchy. He condemns the Rousseauistic idea of a reversion to a state of nature, which he attributes by implication to Paine, as devoid of common sense. His general estimate of Paine's powers is typical of the attitude of the scholar in politics toward the rougher-hewn popular crusader :

I recognize in Mr. Paine a mind not disciplined by early education, not softened and refined by a various and extensive intercourse with the world, not enlarged with the knowledge which books supply; but endowed by nature with very great vigor and strengthened by long and intense habits of reflection. Acute he appears to me, but not comprehensive; and bold, but not profound. Of man in his general nature he seems only to have grasped a part, and of man as distinguished by local and temporary circumstances his views are indirect and confined. His notions are therefore too partial for theory and too novel for practice, and under a fair semblance of simplicity, conceals a mass of most dangerous errors.⁴²

In his friend Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae*, however, Parr finds the nearest approach to a true balance between

⁴² *Ibid.*, III, 239, 241, 248.

Burke's idea that the past in actual experience had drunk the fount of political wisdom dry and Paine's arrant abstract republicanism and vicious refinement of theory:

In the rapid yet eccentric motions of Mr. Burke's mind through the vast and trackless spaces of politics, it often loses the power of attraction upon my own; and as to Mr. Paine, upon my first approach towards him, I was instantly repelled to an immeasurable distance, and for a time was content to view him, as philosophers look through a telescope at some dim and sullen planet whose orbit is at the remotest extremity from the center. But in the middle and more temperate path which Mr. Mackintosh has generally pursued I could often accompany him with pleasure; for, like the earth in the solar system, he seems neither to approach too near to the dazzling fountain of light nor to recede from it too far.

It is evident, however, that in some respects Mackintosh's ideas are closer to Paine's than his friend wishes they might be. He disagrees with Mackintosh, for instance, in not believing that "the existence of ranks is repugnant to the social union" and that church officials are mere state pensioners. His statement of his general opinion of Mackintosh's work and powers is a good illustration of his antithetic style at its best:

In Mackintosh . . . I see the sternness of a republican without his acrimony, and the ardor of a reformer without his impetuosity. His taste in morals, like that of Mr. Burke, is equally pure and delicate with his taste in literature. His mind is so comprehensive that generalities cease to be barren, and so vigorous that detail itself becomes interesting. He introduces every question with

perspicuity, states it with precision, and pursues it with easy and unaffected method. Sometimes perhaps he may amuse his readers with excursions into paradox; but he never bewilders them by flights into romance. His philosophy is far more just and far more amiable than the philosophy of Paine, and his eloquence is only not equal to the eloquence of Mr. Burke. He is argumentative without sophistry, fervid without fury, profound without obscurity, and sublime without extravagance.⁴³

| We shall now follow Dr. Parr's general political opinions through the rest of the revolutionary era and then trace the progress and nature of his various friendships with leaders of the liberal or radical causes. |

From DeQuincey's point of view, "the French Revolution unhinged the sanity of his moral judgments"⁴⁴ and he never afterwards regained a steady equilibrium of mind. But it is surely putting it more justly to say that the purely political convictions at which he had, as shown above, rather deliberately arrived by 1793 were so firmly based that he consistently retained them. *The Letter from Irenopolis* and the *Sequel* perhaps expressed his opinions more circumspectly than, as some of his friends indicated, he was accustomed to express them in private. It is known, for instance, that, to show his disapproval of Burke's *Reflections*, he hung the great man's portrait upside down. The same sort of whimsical but unmistakable disapproval he meted out to Paley, the arch-orthodox divine, who had just written his *Reasons for Contentment* in an attempt to show what real blessings English-

⁴³ *Ibid.*, III, 249, 250-251.

⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*, 75.

men enjoyed under a popular government. For the enormities of the French Revolution he was disposed to blame the government rather than the people. The execution of Louis XVI repelled him. On January 23, 1793, he dined with Horne Tooke and drank the toast: "Destruction to the destroyers of Louis Capet."⁴⁵ But standing out consistently in opposition to Pitt's policy of a military league against the young republic, he so stubbornly refused to ascribe justice to the war against France that he was charged by his enemies and some of his friends with mere truculence. In various sermons he decried the war spirit; he consistently and vehemently denounced the repressive acts of the Pitt ministry; and he delighted in the outcome of the state trials of 1794. In 1796 his erstwhile friend Mathias, who collected in his *Pursuits of Literature* a list of all the distinguished persons suspected of favoring the French Revolution in order to crush them with a single blow of his satirical bludgeon, committed a wholesale assault upon Parr. The following is a specimen:

Who now reads Parr? his title who shall give?
 Doctor sententious hight or positive?
 From Greek, or French, or any Roman ground
 In mazy progress and eternal round,
 Quotations dance, and wonder at their place,

⁴⁵ Johnstone's *Memoir*, 446. A few days after the execution he heard Bishop Horsley, who was his special antipathy, in a sermon on the martyrdom of King Charles, which he ended with the prayer that the thoughts of the regicides' hearts might be forgiven them. "Dr. Parr instantly exclaimed, 'Damnable doctrine! Master Horsley, damnable doctrine!' Many persons around could hear these expressions. The Doctor then turned...and continued his comments in Greek." (*Parriana*, I, 497-498.)

- Buz through his wig and give the bush more grace . . .
 Words upon words, and most against their will,
 And honied globules dribble through his quill.
 Mawkish and thick, earth scarce the tropes supplies,
 Heaven lends her moon and clouded galaxies: . . .
- Let him but wrangle, and in any shape
 Not insignificance itself can scape . . .
 Parr prints a paper; well in all things equal,
 Sense, taste, wit, judgment; but pray read the *Sequel*.
 Sequel to what? the Doctor only knows.
 Morsels of politics, most chosen prose,
 Of nobles, Priestley, Plato, democrats,
 Pitt, Plutarch, Curtis, Burke, Rous, and Rats.⁴⁶

But he persistently went his way. He made conditional his compliance with political proclamations for the observance of fasts; he failed to take part in the national self-congratulation over the naval victories of 1797; in the same year he was prominent in a meeting at Warwick which called for the dismissal of the ministry; and he refused to approve the custom of placing trophies of war on the altars. Between 1798 and 1802 his friend, Dr. Bennet, Bishop of Cloyne, ceased correspondence with him on account of his violent temper and strong expressions of opinion on political matters. The revolution in Ireland had separated the liberals and the republicans sharply from the upholders of the Crown, and the Tory bishop could take no chances.

Dr. Parr's friendship with James Mackintosh reminds us of that between Godwin and Holcroft. Parr had a

⁴⁶ *The Pursuits of Literature* (London, 1798), Third Dialogue, lines 180-210.

good deal of Godwin's frankness in his affection, and in political philosophy he seems to have regarded Mackintosh as a kind of protégé. They first met at Hatton in the autumn of 1791, Parr having been attracted to him by the *Vindiciae Gallicae*. During the next few years, to which Mackintosh's free-lancing in politics was principally limited, they were inseparable. In 1792 Pitt's proclamation against seditious writings brought vehement protests from them both. The spirit of their intercourse is well indicated by the remark of Parr in capitulating to his friend after a long argument: "Jemmy, I cannot talk you down; but I can think you down, Jemmy."⁴⁷ After a visit paid him by the two men, William Taylor of Norwich writes about them to Southey October 18, 1799:

Both were dazzling men. One scarcely knew whether to admire more the oracular significance and compact rotundity of the single sentences of Parr, or the easy flow and glittering expansion of the unwearied and unwearying eloquence of Mackintosh . . . Whereas the latter inspired admiration rather than attachment, there was a lovingness about Parr which gave him an immense superiority.⁴⁸

In 1795 a coldness sprang up between them on account of Mackintosh's failure to perform a service for Joseph Gerald, a young radical condemned to Botany Bay. Mackintosh was just then beginning the practice of law

⁴⁷ John Forster, *op. cit.*, 72. This anecdote is somewhat differently given by Field in the *Memoir*, II, 124.

⁴⁸ J. W. Robberds, *Memoir of the Life and Writings of William Taylor of Norwich* (London, 1843), I, 297.

and was apparently more solicitous about the effect of his opinions upon his professional prospects than Parr thought was consistent with intellectual integrity. "Mackintosh," he said among other severe things, "came up from Scotland with a metaphysical head, a cold heart, and open hands." About this time too, in reaction from the excesses of the French Revolution, Mackintosh came to express his entire agreement with Burke and passed over to the Tory majority. This was an action which irritated the staunch old Whig even more. Parr, it appears, did not fail to remind him often of his political apostasy. On a certain occasion, in remonstrating with Mackintosh concerning his lack of sensibility over the hanging for high treason in June, 1798, of one James O'Coigley, he rejoined to Mackintosh's assertion that O'Coigley was a rascal:

Yes, Jamie, he was a bad man, but he might have been worse; he was an Irishman, but he might have been a Scotchman; he was a priest, but he might have been a lawyer; he was a republican, but he might have been an apostate.⁴⁹

However, their purely speculative opinions seem to have followed the same course, for their open reactions from Godwinian doctrines came at about the same time. In 1799 in a letter occasioned by the receipt of a copy of Mackintosh's published *Lectures on the Law of Nature and of Nations*, he writes in the free spirit of their old friendship, anticipating his own public repudiation of Godwinian principles:

⁴⁹ *Table Talk of Samuel Rogers*, pp. 48-49.

I have something to tell you about the simplification of principles, or rather the simpleton-jargon about R-r-reason, and let us do the business well. I don't mean-us, but you; and, you dog, nobody can do it better; . . . the only exception I can think of is Lord Bacon. Yet, you dog, I hate you, for you want decision . . . Oh, Jemmy! feel your powers, assert your dignity: out upon vanity, and cherish pride . . . You dog, I wish you were here to quaff my good port and scent my good tobacco.⁵⁰

In the spring of 1800 Parr was a frequent visitor at Mackintosh's house. Then, with Mackintosh's acceptance of knighthood in 1803 and certain misrepresentations of their officious friends, Dr. Parr seems to have become further estranged from him than ever. They were at last reconciled in 1820 at the house of Samuel Rogers through his intermediation.

Parr, like Godwin,⁵¹ seems to have had a remarkable faculty for attracting young men. Perhaps the most intimate of these friendships for ingenuous and high-minded youths who rode the crests of revolutionary enthusiasm was that for Joseph Gerrald, his old pupil at Stanmore School. In 1794 he was greatly moved by the trial of the unfortunate young reformer. As he had before unsuccessfully attempted to dissuade Gerrald from joining the more radical political societies and especially from

⁵⁰ R. J. Mackintosh, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Sir James Mackintosh* (London, 1835), I, 105-106.

⁵¹ For an account of the relations of the young radicals, Place, Hone, Basil Montague, Henry Crabb Robinson, Bulwer-Lytton, and John Arnot, to Godwin, see B. Sprague Allen, "Minor Disciples of Radicalism in the Revolutionary Era," *Modern Philology*, XXI, 277-301 (1924).

attending the British Convention in Edinburgh in late 1793, so he fruitlessly advised him to flee the country after his indictment and volunteered to indemnify him for damages. After Gerald's sentence to deportation, Parr wrote him in the summer of 1795 a most affecting letter, entirely free from his usual pomposity, condoling with him in his misfortunes, and still attempting to apply sedatives to his inflammable disposition:

Do not, do not by turbulence in conversation or action give your enemies occasion to make the cup of misery more bitter. Reflect seriously on your past life, and review many of those opinions which you have unfortunately taken up and which, as you know from experience, have little tended to make you a happier or better man. I do not mean, Joseph, to reproach you, but I do mean to advise you to such a use of your talents as may console you under the sorrows of this life.

Gerald's touching tribute to Dr. Parr, written on board the *Hulks* en route to Botany Bay, is a very beautiful memorial of their friendship. It runs in part:

I have repeatedly attempted to write to my ever honoured and loved friend and father, Dr. Parr; but it is impossible. The tender and filial affection which I bear him . . . who poured into my untutored mind the elements of all, either of learning or morals, which is valuable about me, whose great instructions implanted in my bosom the seeds of that magnanimity which I trust I now display and at which persecution itself must stand abashed . . . rushes at once upon my mind . . . To the greater part of my friends I *have* written but to Dr. Parr I have *not* written. But to *his* heart my silence

speaks. The painter, who could not express the excessive grief, covered with a veil the face of Agamemnon⁵²

After Gerald's untimely death in banishment, Dr. Parr became the guardian of his son.

Walter Savage Landor in his "mad Jacobin" days at Oxford shared largely in the ideas and the affections of Dr. Parr. Before going up to the university he had become acquainted with Parr at Warwick. While at Oxford and afterwards he was in the habit of submitting his literary efforts to Parr. Forster thinks that Parr appealed to Landor because of his proficiency in Latin, his association with Johnson, and his liberalism in politics. The political pieces of Landor's first volume of poems,⁵³ published in 1795 are certainly in part the outcome of his early association with Parr. So also is his *Moral Epistle to Earl Stanhope* of the same year, a satire in the manner of Pope attacking Pitt, drawing an odious comparison between the republican earl and the Tory minister, and adorned with notes on the need of reform in representation. But Parr's influence in leading him into the open strife of politics on Fox's side is clearly seen in Landor's various political contributions to the *Courier*, for which and for the *Morning Post* at that time Coleridge, Southey, Lamb, and Lloyd were writing in behalf of the liberal

52 *Works*, I, 453, 454-455.

53 Of this volume, only the political poems show any genuine feeling arising from his own experience. See William Bradley, *The Early Poems of Walter Savage Landor* (New York, 1914), p. 25. A recent study of Landor which insists upon the dominance of his concern with politics in the larger part of his writings omits any mention of Parr as his early political mentor. (George J. Becker, "Landor's Political Purpose," *Studies in Philology*, XXXV, 446-456, July, 1938).

cause. At the end of the decade Parr introduced Landor to his radical friend Robert Adair, with whom he set to belabouring Pitt after Parr's own heart. And soon the satirists of the *Anti-Jacobin* were turning the envenomed shafts of their unprincipled wit against the three of them.⁵⁴ Upon Pitt's resignation in 1801, Parr wrote to Landor urging the exposal of what he regarded as the mere machinations of an impostor for the eventual increase of his power and even providing Landor with a sketch of the literary attack he should direct. Landor in due course reports that he has "taken courage to follow the path you pointed out in pursuing the execrable Pitt"⁵⁵ and subjoins a copy of the attack. Landor consistently submitted his political satires to Parr for perusal. In some of these he became so acrimonious in hunting down Pitt and his favorites that even his uncompromising instructor counseled moderation.

Parr's unbounded admiration for his "dear Walter" seemed never to have been disturbed by quarrels, of which he had so many with other friends, and the warmth of their friendship continued unabated until the end. Even with the announcement of his marriage in 1811 Landor sent Parr a Latin poem against the ministry! Though he omitted Parr from among the company of the great in *Imaginary Conversations*, he paid a glowing tribute to the early guidance of his venerable friend in a letter delivered to him on his deathbed and later published in the preface of the fourth volume. He wrote in part:

⁵⁴ See letter of Landor to Parr, Parr's *Works*, VIII, 47-48.

⁵⁵ John Forster, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

Had I completed my undertaking, I should have prefixed to the last volume a dedication to . . . Dr. Samuel Parr, and it would have been with more propriety inscribed to him than any of the former, as containing less of levity and of passion, and greatly more, if I had done justice to the interlocutors of argument and of eloquence. My first exercises in these were under his eye and guidance, corrected by his admonition, and animated by his applause. His house, his liberty, his heart were always open to me; and among my few friendships . . . I shall ever remember his to the last hour of my existence with tender gratitude.

Parr's friendship with Godwin began in the heyday of their influence. They were made acquainted through their common friend Mackintosh in 1794. Godwin records that Parr "had earnestly sought the acquaintance and intimacy of the author of *Political Justice*. In October of 1794, having become very friendly with Dr. Parr, Godwin went to Hatton on a visit, from which he was suddenly called back to London by a letter from Holcroft in Newgate."⁵⁶ During the following year their friendship was cemented by their common sympathy and admiration for Gerald and by their common efforts in his behalf. To *Political Justice*, in Godwin's opinion at least, Parr gave a tacit adherence, though there is no record of his explicit acceptance of the philosophy of the Enlightenment. It may be observed again that Dr. Parr was much more careful of reservations in his published works than in his private discourse. He did, however, introduce Godwin among all his friends and the philosopher "was

56 C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries* (London, 1876), I, 118.

everywhere received with curiosity and kindness," of which Godwin showed his appreciation by going with him to church. He was later able better to distinguish between Parr's logic, which was inexorably against any sort of purely experimental ideas in politics or in morals, and his feelings, which seemed to give countenance to many of the philosopher's pet ideas. In 1801 he was writing:

His head and his logic have I believe, scarcely ever been favorable to . . . speculations which might lead to experiments for meliorating the political condition of mankind. I have always found him the advocate of old establishments and, what appeared to me, old abuses. But in this respect his heart seemed to my apprehension much better than his logic.⁵⁷

During the summer of 1795 Godwin came for another sojourn at Hatton. In March, 1796, Parr dined with Holcroft at London in company with Godwin and Mackintosh, and in the next month Parr and his family called upon Godwin. Again in the summer of 1797 on a trip into Staffordshire with his young disciple Basil Montagu to visit Thomas Wedgwood Godwin returned the call. Their intercourse seems at this time to have been very intimate and Godwin's fondness for Parr's family is marked. In his delightful letters to his wife written during the journey, Godwin reports that Montagu has fallen in love with Parr's youngest daughter Catherine and that they have been consoling Parr on the elopement of his daughter Sara. But a slight rift seems already opening between them. There is the spirit of friendship

57 Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon.

but hardly the spirit of understanding. Godwin writes to his wife of "a little good-humoured sparring" over a criticism directed against him by Parr:

I mentioned it with the utmost humour, but desired an explanation, as I was really incapable of understanding it. He appeared confused, said he had been in high good humour the evening . . . and had talked away at a great rate . . . But he was sure he did not use the word *mean*. We had a good deal of raillery. I told him that he understood everything except my system of *Political Justice*; and he replied that was exactly the case with me. Montagu afterwards told me that Parr had formerly assured him that I was more skilful in moral science than any man now living.⁵⁸

That such an opinion Parr was no longer entertaining even as a mere amenity, became more and more evident. In June, 1798, they had their final interview in London. In December, 1799, their correspondence was broken. Godwin's letter of that month remained unanswered and the receipt of a copy of his novel *St. Leon* remained unacknowledged. In January, 1800, Godwin wrote again, heartily condemning Mackintosh's political lectures as an unscrupulous attack upon the new philosophy and apparently expecting Parr's assent to his opinion concerning them. On Easter Sunday Parr replied at last in no uncertain fashion in his famous *Spital Sermon*. This sermon, with Mackintosh's lectures of the preceding year, did more than anything else to accelerate the rout of the Godwinian philosophy among a large number of its previous adherents and brought his friendship with Godwin

⁵⁸ C. Kegan Paul, *op. cit.*, I, 252-253.

to a sudden and painful end. It was delivered by invitation at Christ Church, Newgate Street, as the annual address before the Lord Mayor and the governors of various incorporated charitable institutions, chiefly of royal foundation, established in London. It was published in 1801 with an almost endless apparatus of notes, which swelled it to two hundred and fifty-six pages in his collected works, and, to quote the *Edinburgh Review*, "appeared to concern every learned thing, every learned man, and almost every unlearned man since the beginning of the world." Parr's critics writing in the *Anti-Jacobin*, as well as the radicals, were taken completely aback by this sudden open renunciation of ideas with which at least since 1793 they had associated him.

The *Spital Sermon* is the first of Parr's works which is predominantly philosophical. It is in essence an attack upon the philanthropic system of Godwin, as originally presented in *Political Justice*, which requires us to exercise benevolence for the good of the whole collective species, even to the exclusion of regard for those immediately connected by closest ties with us. The main point of the sermon, to use Parr's own words, is to show "how far by the constitution of human nature and the circumstances of human life, the principles of particular and universal benevolence are compatible"; and its general purpose is "to facilitate the progress of wisdom without casuistry, benevolence without singularity, and piety without superstition."⁵⁹

He begins by demolishing Helvetius's theory of the origin and nature of the social affections, which regards

⁵⁹ *Works*, II, 367, 622.

the social virtues as derived from the instinct of self-preservation, self-love as the mainspring of progress, and the so-called higher virtues as arising from the selfish desire to be superior to the brutes. Turning to his attack upon Godwin, he urges that universal philanthropy is unfit as the keystone of a system of ethics, being neither solid nor coherent. The laws of our nature define our duties as members of families; the laws of society define our duties as citizens. Whenever such duties are turned by expansion into universal philanthropy, they become elusive, impracticable, and uncontrollable and hinder the performance of the actual duties of social life. To speak of the community of mankind is to "use the language rather of rhetorical ornament than of philosophical precision." He brings the authority of the Scriptures against Godwin's idea of justice:

The precepts of Christianity . . . do not make the moral worth of the sufferer the sole or even the chief measure of his right to succour . . . They do not bewilder or annoy our minds by throwing compassion or gratitude or clemency into a hypothetical state of variance with justice.⁶⁰

The following is an interesting analysis of justice as measured by considerations of pure moral merit:

The distress of men excites our pity; the moral worth of men excites our esteem. We are often influenced by both in doing good to our fellow-creatures, and we may be influenced so to do by either in the absence of the other. But in the conflict between esteem for one man and compassion for another, various circumstances . . .

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 372.

may concur to justify us in acting from compassion rather than esteem; and the general good of society as included in the good of the individual would thus be most effectually promoted.⁶¹

He also points out that the ancient writers, of whom he gives a formidable array, "did not set justice in *opposition* to any other social virtues . . . ; that they did not erect systems upon the basis of justice nor employ the colossal weight of the term in crushing other moral excellencies, which, together with justice, were considered as pillars in the temple of virtue." While he approves of universal benevolence as "a disposition . . . to desire and to do good rather than harm to those with whom we are quite unconnected," he does not think that it could become the object of a passion. "Our affections are generally enfeebled by expansion and invigorated by compression."⁶² Patriotism, then, has the same claims as family affection against universal benevolence. He denies that with the majority of men, as the philosophers of the Enlightenment declared, patriotism is the result of the "blind prejudices of education, the insatiable thirst for glory, . . . the sordid desire for gain, or a savage appetite for devastation" and affirms that it has its roots in the ineradicable affections of childhood and family life.

Parr's exposal of the theory of universal benevolence was, as far as Godwin was concerned, in large part, a work of supererogation; for he attacked errors which Godwin had already ingenuously confessed in the *Enquirer*. In one of the notes of the sermon as published,

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, II, 475.

⁶² *Ibid.*, II, 373, 374.

he makes, in fairness to the philosopher, a belated acknowledgment of Godwin's retraction of his exposition of justice in such a way as to degrade the virtues of domestic life.

The *Spital Sermon* brought forth prompt and keen reproach from Godwin on April 24:

Since Mackintosh's lectures, it has become a sort of fashion with a large party to join in the cry against me. It is the part, I conceive, of original genius to give the tone to others rather than to join a pack after it has already become loud and numerous . . . I am entitled to conclude that you have altered your mind respecting me. In that case, I should be glad you would answer to your satisfaction what crimes I am chargeable with now in 1800 of which I had not been guilty in 1794, when with so much kindness and zeal you sought my acquaintance.”⁶³

Dr. Parr answered five days later with Johnsonian plainness and a frankness that approached brutality. He proposed to return *St. Leon* unread. The letter of the preceding December from Godwin, which he had not expected to find pleasant, he had laid aside unopened and, after “a not very diligent” search, had been unable to find-it. He vehemently defends Mackintosh and continues:

Your visits entitled you to civility, and yet I am under the painful necessity of acknowledging that I do not wish you in future to give yourself the trouble of writing to me any more letters or favoring me with any more visits . . . I never sought your acquaintance, Sir, with any zeal . . . I have treated you with the respect that

⁶³ C. Kegan Paul, *op. cit.*, I, 378.

is due to your talents and attainments. But before the year 1800 I had ceased to think of you so favorably as I thought of you in 1794. I had not in 1794 read in your *Enquirer* the passage where you speak so irreverently and unfavorably about the Founder of that religion of which you know I am a teacher and a sincere believer . . . I had not in 1794 been shocked, in common with all wise and good men, by a work you entitle *Memoirs of the Author of the Rights of Women*. I had not then discovered the dreadful effects of your opinion upon the conduct, the peace, and the welfare of two or three young men, whose talents I esteemed and whose virtues I loved. I had not then seen your eagerness and perseverance in employing every kind of vehicle to convey to every class of readers those principles which, so long as they appeared only in the form of a metaphysical treatise, might have done less extensive mischief. Above all, Sir, I had not considered the dangerous tendency of your tenets with the seriousness which the situation of the moral and political world has lately produced in my mind upon subjects most interesting to the happiness of society and to the preservation of that influence which virtue and religion ought to have upon the sentiments and happiness of mankind.⁶⁴

Godwin, in his notes on Parr's letter which form the first draft of his pamphlet, *Thoughts Occasioned by Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon*, shows a more temperate spirit than his erstwhile friend. He calmly asserts, for example, that at the period of their greatest cordiality Parr was accustomed to call and believe him an atheist. In fact, the

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 382-383. For a general discussion of the revulsion to Godwin's doctrines, see B. Sprague Allen, "The Reaction Against William Godwin," *Modern Philology*, XVI, 225-243 (September, 1918).

palm for "particular" benevolence in this instance goes, not to its champion, but to the man whom he had charged with disparaging it. In an unfinished draft of a final letter to Parr, Godwin expresses his "pungent grief" over Parr's violation of their friendship:

I rejoice that there are not many men like you. If there were, there would indeed be little inducement to the attempting public benefit by the acquisition of talents, when the very production which first obtained for its author the attention of one who was a stranger to him, is afterward unblushingly assigned as the ground, and "above all" the ground of alienation and a tone of reproach that I think it would be rather unmanly to apply to the most atrocious criminal that ever held up his hand at the bar of the Old Bailey.⁶⁵

The unpleasant outcome of it all seems, on the whole, less creditable to Dr. Parr's usual goodness of heart than to his integrity of mind.

It is notable that in his *Spital Sermon* and in his other scattered philosophical pronouncements Parr shows little attention to the French revolutionary philosophy except as it came to him indirectly through Paine or Godwin. Even in his repudiation of the "selfish system" he directs his attack as much against Hobbes and Mandeville as against Helvetius. He appends, in fact, a rather temperate note on Helvetius to the *Spital Sermon*. He thinks that his ideas on education are to be preferred to the pernicious doctrines of Rousseau; and that his *De l'Esprit*, even in its deep hatred of priesthood and its profession of outright infidelity, shows benevolence of mind,

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 386-387.

misdirected but sincere; but that he opens up the sluice-gates of the sensual appetites in such a way as to imperil the well-being of society. On the doctrine of perfectibility as expounded by the philosophers, Parr's view is characteristic of an orthodox churchman: it does not allow the proper sense of humility before "the Great Archetype of all perfection." He agrees with Malthus in his refutation of Godwin's scheme of equality and of Condorcet's conjectures on the organic perfectibility of man. He pays a tribute, however, to the character of Condorcet, who, he thinks, "seems to have been worthier of happier times than those in which he lived, of better colleagues than those with which he acted, and of enemies far nobler than those by whom he was destroyed."⁶⁶

But only the moral implications of the revolutionary philosophy are repudiated in the *Spital Sermon*; no political conversion was involved. His political liberalism was not affected by his abjuration of Godwinism. This has been shown above in his encouragement of Landor's attacks against the ministry. The following extract of an account given to Landor of a party at Mackintosh's after the turn of the century shows that his political thinking still retained considerable fluidity:

My Jemmy was delightful, and I will tell you who were with us. 1. A sturdy democratic yoeman. 2. A university bedel, who . . . is a shrewd, argumentative, sceptical, anti-ministerial dog. 3. What is more surprising a doctor of divinity, who . . . makes war upon all bishops and archbishops, and is a rank, fire-away,

uncompromising Whig in Church and State. These were our companions. There never was such good luck.⁶⁷

He even hoped for the early enfranchisement of Catholics. He persistently opposed the war even after its resumption in 1803. He busied himself with Basil Montagu in the agitation against capital punishment. And his last notable liberal utterance was a discursive note in a review of Fox's *James II* on the barbarities of the penal code, in attacking which he joined his friends Bentham and Capel Lofft.

It is hoped that this sketch of Dr. Parr as a political and literary personality may disclose more fully than has yet been recognized the bias of De Quincey's knouting. He was a respected and influential force in the liberal thought of his time.

⁶⁷ John Forster, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

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The works listed below are intended primarily to provide guidance for a complete study of the literary influences of the French Revolution in England. Many of these writers of course, perhaps most of them, belong to the borderlands of politics and literature. I have included a number of secondary sources useful for the understanding of the period from a purely political point of view.

The bibliography contains a complete list of all the works consulted, except those used in most incidental fashion, on the revolutionary aspects of the writers treated here. In the few cases of collected editions of these writers, I have foregone a separate listing of the works consulted, since they are indicated in the notes. The works by and about other writers belonging to the revolutionary tradition are more selective. I have also included some of the most important and provocative works written in opposition to the radicals.

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